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ABSTRACT

The articles in this journal, which is dedicated to the family support field, include such topics as: (1) creating links between family support and early childhood education programs; (2) the challenges facing grandparent caregivers; (3) the problems endemic in social services for infants, toddlers, and their families; (4) the use of the internet and multimedia technologies to enhance family support and education; (5) the benefits of retreats in aiding families to develop a balance among work, family, and other parts of life; (6) a case study of an inner city public school; (6) highlights of the Family Preservation and Support Services Program's first year; (7) a report on how the Center for Family Resources helps others link programs, policies, and practices; and (8) a pull-out guide to advocacy for and with families. (SW)

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FAMILY RESOURCE COALITION

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FAMILY SUPPORT REACHING OUT

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Spring/Summer 1995

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Creating Family-Supportive Early Childhood Programs

by Mary Larner

Photo courtesy of the Family Academy, profiled on page 15

The time is right to examine and experiment with linkages between family support and early childhood programs. The once-novel notion that children develop within families, which themselves develop within communities, is now widely accepted, and expectations of programs for children and their parents are changing rapidly.

The principles and practices of family support programs are beginning to influence other service systems, changing ideas about the form that programs for children and families should take. For example, many leaders concerned with welfare reform now hope to help families break the intergenerational grip of poverty through "two-generation" programs that support the development of both parents and children.[1] Two-generation programs begin with components to encourage adults' self-sufficiency—such as basic education, job training, and assistance gaining employment—but build upon these with parent education, child care, and child development interventions.

The complexity of families' lives is also drawing family support and early childhood programs closer together. We cannot design programs for children without considering parents' needs. Increasingly, parents of all income levels hold jobs or attend educational programs with rigid, full-day schedules. Children whose parents are employed full time cannot take advantage of part-day educational programs like Head Start, unless the preschool experience is combined with full-day child care services. Many programs also seek to involve parents in children's activities, but fewer and fewer parents are free to participate during the day, and evening activities must compete with the dinner dishes, baths, and laundry. Now more than ever, we must take advantage of the daily contact between parents and staff of early childhood programs.[2]

To capitalize on the family support potential of child care, Bernice Weissbourd envisions family-centered child care programs that "utilize the high-quality program they provide for children to act as a hub around which programs for parents and families may revolve and through which relationships among parents and between parents and staff members are established and maintained."[3] Such programs would involve close collaboration between parents and staff, a range of activities designed for parents, and an organized network of referrals to community resources.

Is that vision achievable? What will it take for the early childhood field to move beyond its traditional boundaries, to create new services for families and new partnerships with parents? Early childhood leaders who embrace the

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This article is an excerpt from the monograph *Linking Family Support and Early Childhood Programs: Issues, Experiences, Opportunities*, written by Mary Larner and published by the Family Resource Coalition as part of FRC's Best Practices Project. It is one of four ground-breaking papers by top thinkers in the family support field, two of which are now available.

Linking Family Support and Early Childhood Programs provides basic information about the design and orientation of early childhood programs and examines strategies for applying the principles of family support to these programs—including educational programs such as Head Start and child care for parents who work or attend school.

To order *Linking Family Support and Early Childhood Programs*, send $6.00 (FRC members) or $8.00 (nonmembers) to FRC, 200 S. Michigan Ave., 16th Floor, Chicago, IL 60604, or fax your order with a credit card number to 312/341-9361. To find out more about these monographs or the Best Practices Project, call FRC at 312/341-0900.

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Photo courtesy of The Family Center, Clinton, Missouri
Photo by Catherine Hall

vision of family-centered child care have much to learn from the family support field, but effective lines of communication between the two fields have yet to be established. Family support and early childhood leaders and practitioners cannot work well together without a better understanding of how each field's history, mission, funding patterns, and institutional structures shape its approaches to working with children and families.

Combining family support and child care in ways that retain the power of both the family-centered and child-centered elements is no easy task. We must seize opportunities and surmount difficulties if the next generation of programs is to combine the strengths of the family support and early childhood fields. Those opportunities and difficulties are described below.

Joint Provision of Family and Child Services

Both early research demonstrations and contemporary two-generation programs suggest several conclusions about the strategy of providing family-focused and child-focused services within the same program.

Program components for children and parents are most effective when they are carefully designed and sufficiently powerful to address the developmental needs of each group. Parents want and can benefit from not just parent education, but access to educational, vocational, and mental health supports that enable them to achieve personal goals. Children deserve not just custodial child care that keeps them safe and supervised while their parents are busy, but also experiences that support their cognitive, socioemotional, and physical development. Balanced, dual-focus programs that reflect the state of the art in each component area are costly, but each component strengthens the effectiveness of the other. Such comprehensive interventions may be the most efficient and appropriate way of serving the families and children who are at greatest risk of poor outcomes.

While program components targeting the individual needs of children and adults are important, so are family-focused experiences in which children and parents participate together, if the program is to support and influence processes that take place within the family. By bringing parents and children together in contexts that enable them to interact in new ways, programs can help family members integrate new skills, insights, and approaches into their patterns of interaction with one another. In many cases, programs are integrated administratively but the experiences they provide to family members are dispersed. When parents and children each attend separate activities tailored for them, the program is not treating the family as a unit, and may forfeit the opportunity to be family-oriented and family-owned.

And many current two-generation programs attain comprehensiveness through referrals to other agencies, giving program developers no control over the quality of services. Programs are only as family-supportive as their individual components. If component services treat family members in ways that do not communicate respect for their efforts, appreciation for their values and culture, and support for their family responsibilities, program participation is unlikely to have the positive effects expected of family support programs. Consensus on values and regular communication among staffs of the program components can help ensure that they neither work at cross-purposes nor give families contradictory messages.

Family-Supportive Early Childhood Programs

Helping mainstream, typical early childhood programs function in ways that are truly supportive of families is a more difficult challenge, but it may be the most important one for us to meet. Well-funded programs with the resources to offer children and families a rich assortment of services are the exception, not the norm. Rather than investing our policy efforts to achieve such important but rare programs—which reach relatively few families—we must work to create and capitalize on opportunities to move typical child care or preschool programs in the direction of family-supportive practice.

Having staff and resources to devote to interactions with parents gives programs the flexibility to "do it right." It takes time to organize avenues for parent participation, whether they include volunteering in the program, joint participation on decision-making bodies, educational workshops, social activities, parent-provider conferences, or simply telephone calls. Many programs have strong parent involvement components and coordinators whose job

it is to work with parents. However, it is not easy to raise funds to cover the coordinator's salary in the difficult fiscal environment confronting most early childhood programs. But umbrella organizations such as resource and referral agencies or family support programs may be able to employ a coordinator to provide critical staff support to a number of small early childhood programs that are attempting to add family support components.

Designers of parent involvement efforts in child-oriented programs must weigh the logistical demands that participation places on parents against parents' degree of motivation to participate. Programs in which staff and parents work full time face difficult scheduling problems, since parents are not available during the program day, and both parents and providers want to protect their private evening time. Creative planning to produce events that are minimally intrusive and maximally rewarding is likely to be worth the effort. For instance, didactic parent education sessions might be replaced by: one-on-one discussions between caregivers and parents; opportunities for parents to influence curriculum, personnel, and program policy decisions; social occasions involving whole families; or workshops that help parents gain real-world skills. Parents' reticence toward one form of involvement doesn't necessarily mean they would not welcome the chance to participate in other ways.

Carefully designing activities for parents is an important step toward family-supportive programming, but an even more critical element is attention to the characteristics, skills, and attitudes of the staff who interact with parents. As long as training focuses only on the child and the child's relations with the caregiver or teacher, the adults who work with families in early childhood programs cannot be expected to embrace a family-centered approach. Pre-service and ongoing training for caregivers and teachers must cover relationships with parents, appreciation of cultural differences, skills of communication and power-sharing with adults, and methods for resolving disagreements and conflicts with parents. Programs also must increase directors' and supervisors' capacity to support and guide their staff in implementing more family-supportive practices. Family support practitioners can contribute to such efforts by partnering with resource and referral agencies and other early childhood groups to develop appropriate training approaches.

Recruiting staff who resemble and identify with the families served is a crucial means of ensuring that early childhood programs are sensitive to both parents and cultures. Often such recruitment means hiring untrained community members and providing supportive supervision and in-service training to build their professional skills while they work in the program. Insofar as professional training is not easily accessible to members of many low-income and minority communities, the educational requirements and qualifications for staff positions must be carefully scrutinized, and, when possible, alternative means of developing and demonstrating professional skill should be explored. Adequate pay scales, access to basic benefits, and opportunities for advancement within early childhood or related fields are also critical if community members are to be attracted to staff roles. The effort to improve working conditions in early childhood programs is often seen as a narrow professional advocacy agenda, but in reality, that agenda intersects with the interests of all advocates for families.

Finally, because none of these important steps will remove all the sources of tension that exist between parents and caregivers, mechanisms must be created to resolve conflicts when they arise. Intermediaries such as family support programs, resource and referral agencies, and other community groups could establish child care ombudsman services. They also could bring child care issues to the attention of consumer advocates and Better Business Bureaus, to make sure our nation's decentralized and diverse child care delivery system is accountable and responsive to parent-consumers. Knowledgeable, sensitive intermediaries are needed to impartially represent the perspectives of both parents and child care providers in order to facilitate understanding, communication, compromises, and alternatives. Such an effort by an impartial party also would show that the larger community shares parents' and providers' interest in the well-being of children.

The Charge for the Future

The work of both family support and early childhood leaders in the past decade has yielded a maturing understanding of what it means *programmatically* to work with children in the context of their families and communities. These positive developments coexist, however, with stubborn realities that remind us that reorienting the nation's early childhood programs to be family-supportive will be no easy task. Early childhood programs are poorly funded and thinly staffed, with a long history of focusing on children and a more recent interest in securing recognition for their professional expertise. These basic facts make early childhood programs a challenging context in which to expect family support principles to flourish.

The importance of moving toward family-centered practice is equally clear, however. The overwhelming majority of parents from all socioeconomic levels now share responsibility for rearing and educating their young children with child care and preschool programs, even though neither parents nor teachers and caregivers receive assistance in their efforts to understand each other and work together, rather than at cross-purposes. Family support programs and individual advocates for families can facilitate relationships between families and early childhood programs in many ways, and can encourage and guide efforts by early childhood professionals to apply family support principles within their programs.

A strong shared commitment to the well-being of children and families draws together parents and caregivers and unites the early childhood and family support fields. Finding ways to combine the resources, skills, and knowledge of the two fields will prepare both to take a giant step into the future to develop the programs children and families need now.

Mary Larner is Policy Analyst and Editor for the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, 300 Second Street, Suite 102, Los Altos, CA 94022, 415/948-3696. She was previously Director for Early Childhood Care and Education at the National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia School of Public Health.

Notes:

SMITH, S., S. BLANK, and R. COLLINS (1992) Pathways to self-sufficiency for two generations: Designing welfare to work programs that benefit children and strengthen families. (New York: Foundation for Child Development)

POWELL, D. (1989) Families and early childhood programs. (Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children)

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Grandparent-Caregivers: Why Parenting Is Different the Second Time Around

By Linda Turner

Census Bureau data gathered in 1990 indicate that grandparents as surrogate parents are of all socioeconomic and ethnic groups. While 68 percent are white, mid-life and older African Americans are nearly twice as likely as whites the same age to be grandparent caregivers. While 75 percent of grandparent caregivers are married, 93 percent of all single ones are women. Most have less than a high school education and live in an urban setting. More live in the South (57 percent) than in all other U.S. areas combined.

A Grassroots Response

As the number of grandparents raising grandchildren grows, supportive responses have emerged nationally and locally, at the grassroots level.

I am temporarily my eight-month-old granddaughter's primary caregiver, and my home will soon become one of the three-generational, grandparent-headed households you'll read about below. Despite the rewards of caring for a child, what was difficult for me 21 years ago as a single mother is a challenging struggle today.

And I am not alone. Undertaking this responsibility has meant major changes in the lives of the approximately 551,000[1] grandparents who either are primary caregivers to their grandchildren or head households in which their grandchildren live. In addition to facing legal and social problems, they often lack support and respite services; many are under extreme stress, which causes physical and mental health problems such as exhaustion and depression.

Most will have inadequate financial resources to provide care for their grandchildren: 56 percent of grandparent caregivers have incomes of less than $20,000. Financially, theirs are the poorest of all types of non-traditional households. Lack of affordable housing jeopardizes those with larger families, and those with high-risk children born with special medical needs usually find their medical resources meager.

Grandparents are raising their grandchildren because of teen pregnancy; parents' substance abuse, death, divorce, joblessness, or incarceration; parents' neglect, abuse, or abandonment of the child; and AIDS and other illnesses.

What Do Grandparent Caregivers Need?

How do you start meeting the needs of grandparent caregivers in your community? A good place to start is by asking them what they need. Then find ways to provide them—either directly or by referral—with those services and supports.

One grandparent caregiver's "wish list" might look like this:

- Short-term respite services (childcare co-located with other services or provided by a parent or grandparent cooperative)
- One-on-one or group counseling for grandparents and grandchildren
- Peer support and mutual aid groups
- Telephone hotlines and "warm lines"
- "Grandparenting" classes (a refresher course!)
- Toy, clothing, and equipment exchange or lending service
- Advocacy on accessing public and private assistance and programs
- Expert advice on legal, financial, medical, housing, and education questions
- Library of books, pamphlets, videos
- Social, cultural, and recreational activities for the whole family
- Activist organization through which grandparent caregivers can educate the public and lobby for increased services

An outstanding example of a family support program serving intergenerational families is found on the predominantly African American east side of Detroit, where Project GUIDE (Grandparents United: Intergenerational Developmental Education) is mid-way into a five-year Skillman Foundation–funded program to "measurably improve the health and welfare of intergenerational custodial families, reduce social isolation, and provide support services." The success of the $514,000 pilot program has attracted financial support from United Way and other foundations.

The program was conceived in 1992 as a direct response to the needs of families visiting the Harper Gratiot Multi-Service Center. GUIDE impacts the personal lives and parenting skills of families through individual counseling, group seminars (including support groups), participation in cultural and recreational events, and advocacy for the families' basic human needs. When these families meet, childcare and transportation are provided. GUIDE serves 44 families; 19 are on a waiting list and will begin participating soon. The grandparents and great-aunts and -uncles range in age from 37 to 71.

At the National Level

The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) opened its Grandparent Information Center in Washington, D.C., in September 1993, and in its first year of operation responded to almost 5,000 inquiries. The Center's clearinghouse provides grandparents, service providers, and planners with information, publications, and referrals to national and local resources, including grandparent support groups and organizations that support grandparent caregivers in other ways. See previous page. The Center also educates the public about the special problems grandparents face as primary caregivers of grandchildren, and provides technical assistance on designing programs to community-based grandparent groups and social service agencies.

Linda Turner is Resource and Referral Coordinator for the Family Resource Coalition. She thanks GUIDE Project Manager Jeratha Kennedy and AARP for their assistance.

Note:

CHAUM, D. (1994). [illegible]

For more information contact Project GUIDE, NSO/Harper Gratiot Multi-Service Center, 9641 Harper Ave., Detroit, MI 48213, 313/923-5050 (phone), 313/571-9866 (fax); and Grandparent Information Center, AARP (American Association of Retired Persons), 601 E Street NW, Washington, DC 20049, 202/434-2296 (phone), 202/434-6474 (fax).

These national organizations are linking networks for support groups and offer help in setting up local groups:

ROCKING
(Raising our Children's Kids: An Intergenerational Network of Grandparenting, Inc.)
P.O. Box 96
Niles, MI 49120
Contact: Mary Fron, 606/683-9038

National Coalition of Grandparents
137 Larkin Street
Madison, WI 53705
Contact: Ethel Dunn, 608/238-8751

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A Public Policy Fable:
Meeting the Needs of Families of Infants and Toddlers

by Eleanor Stokes Szanton

Photo courtesy of The Family Center, Clinton Massey
Photo by Catherine Ledner

Once upon a time there was a baby. The baby had a mother, a father, an older brother, a grandmother, a neonatal intensive care follow-up clinic, a special health care nurse, a special educator, a physical therapist, a couple of case managers, and a changing array of child care providers. Her mother had an AFDC case manager, a Medicaid case manager, a WIC program specialist, a stay-in-school program, a drug treatment program, and a home visitor. Her brother did not live with the family; but he had a foster family, a child protective services case manager, and a Head Start program. The baby's father also did not live with her and her mother; he had no one but his friends on the street.

Some of these people who were not in the baby's family only spoke to her mother by phone. A few others came to her home. The rest wanted her mother to come to their various offices or programs in a number of different locations. Those who were particularly conscientious about making services available to the mother spent a lot of time in meetings with each other trying to coordinate their unrelated services. In fact, they spent so much time scheduling coordination with each other—as well as writing proposals, reports, and evaluations to their many different funders—that they had little energy left to schedule anything at the mother's convenience. Yet they were quite concerned that she was frequently unable to keep her many appointments and that sometimes she seemed uninterested in services. They didn't discuss the father.

Services for infants and toddlers and their families in the United States are rife with the problems that this "fable" demonstrates. They are uncoordinated, emphasize weakness rather than strength, and concentrate on only part of the family. And although we are beginning to see some more holistic policies, we have not yet come close to rewriting this story.

Although very few actual families have quite as many service providers as the family in the story, many could. ZERO TO THREE/National Center for Clinical Infant Programs has just completed a study of six communities that are trying as hard as any to integrate the services offered to the families of very young children. Its report, *Living and Testing the Collaborative Process: A Case Study of Community-based Services Integration*, shows in grim detail how much remains to be done and, more importantly, how terribly hard it is for conscientious communities to make services fit together in a way that truly meets the needs of families.[1]

Comparing the state of human services for infants and toddlers and their families in the United States with those in Canada shows how uncoordinated and deficit-oriented our own approach is—and that an integrated, strengths-based system is possible. Canada is a nation about the same age as our own, which also was settled largely by immigrants and reflects a diversity of ethnicity and background. Over the past 50 years Canada has put together a coherent social policy providing family allowances, paid parental leave at childbirth, free health (including prenatal) care, home visits to new parents, and a variety of specialized services to families who have need of them—all covered by a national health plan. In contrast, the United States, having turned its back on a universal

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system of support, has developed a never-ending proliferation of categorical services, each one of which is the pet project of a particular legislator and his or her constituency and is available only for those who show weakness or need. This approach has two major defects:

1. the services are unlikely to be well integrated, and

2. the recipient of services receives a pejorative label.

We all know the harm caused when a child, as a result of societal labels, sees himself or herself as "slow" or "handicapped" or "a behavior problem" or "a crack baby." Similarly, the relations between providers and consumers of services are fundamentally different if the parent consumer sees the services as something she deserves as a citizen, rather than something she needs as an "at-risk" or "damaged" person. In this context, "eligible"—a term that should carry positive connotations—has come to mean "sufficiently needy."[7]

The final message of the "table" is that in our system of caring for infants and toddlers, almost no attention is paid to the father. Usually he is served only if he takes part in services offered the mother, in which case he is treated as an "assistant mother." For the most part, fathers are ignored except by those who discourse on irresponsible pregnancies, single parents, deadbeat dads, family values, spouse abuse, and men as providers of illegal drugs to their partners.[8] [The strident debate over prevention programs in the federal "crime bill" is one more evidence that fathers seem to be more valuable as the object of rhetoric than as parents.] And though there is not nearly enough effort made in most communities to find and serve all mothers and children who need services, there is even less outreach to fathers, either in their role as parents or to help with other aspects of their lives. Certainly there is no effort to require their attendance at services for the family. Services for them, insofar as they exist, have been centered in the community action and community enterprise initiatives. While some family policies help parents in their breadwinning roles, others concentrate on their nurturing roles[4]—and by and large, the former have focused on men, and the latter on women. And though welfare reform initiatives and the Earned Income Tax Credit are beginning to break down these distinctions for women, they remain in place for men.

Lack of coordination, emphasis on weakness, and concentrating on only part of the family: fortunately, this pattern is beginning to change, as community action revives and certain new laws require more collaborative planning.

- Part H (for children zero through two years of age) of the **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act** (IDEA), enacted in 1986, was the first federal law regarding very young children and their families to require a collaborative planning process—first at the state level, and now at the community level. (This law had significant consumer input, both within and outside the government, from its conception onward.) Part H struggled against budgetary constraints during the recession in the early 1990s, and as a result, many states left children who were "at risk of developmental delay or disability" out of their definition of who was eligible for services. However, in a variety of states and localities the Interagency Coordinating Councils have been creative in pushing for consumer-friendly linkages.[9]

- The **Child and Adolescent System Services Program** (CASSP), approved in the mid-1980s as a federal entitlement to be set aside in states' mental health funds, also mandated collaboration. Until now, that program has by law focused on children who were "seriously emotionally disturbed," a category not usually applied to infants and toddlers. However, the new **Children's Community Mental Health Service Act** has great potential—so far unused—for serving younger children and their families.[9]

- The **Family Preservation and Support Services Program**, initiated by Congress in 1993, requires collaborative planning at both the state and local levels. As federal administrator of the Program, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) expects states to examine the changes that are needed in order to "make delivery of services more responsive to the needs of individuals and communities and more sensitive to the context in which they are to be delivered." HHS also expects the Program to allow states to establish "a more coordinated, flexible [child welfare service] system, built on and linked to existing community services and supports, and able to serve children and their families in a more effective way."[9] And the Maternal and Child Health Bureau of the U.S. Public Health Service has taken steps to require that communities applying for Home Visiting for At-Risk Families grants (under the **Community Integrated Service System** discretionary grant program) coordinate with their states' Family Preservation and Family Support Services initiatives.[9]

- With the 1994 **Head Start** Reauthorization, Congress created a set-aside of at least $600 million over four years for programs to serve infants and toddlers (folding in some present infant/toddler programs). Again, HHS will be expecting these programs' directors to engage in community collaborative planning, beginning with an in-depth assessment of community resources and needs.

- The federal government's **Empowerment Zone/Enterprise Community Initiative**, led jointly by the U.S. Departments of Housing and Urban Development and of Agriculture, authorizes the expenditure of close to $1 billion for poverty-stricken inner cities and rural areas. (Up to $100 million goes to each of up to six cities, and up to $40 million to each of up to three rural areas—to be designated as "Empowerment Zones.") Beyond this, some 65 blighted urban and 30 rural areas can receive $3 million each for the implementation of a community-based strategic plan.[9]

In many cases, the federal initiatives have followed the lead of innovative state or foundation initiatives.[10] The Policy Academy on Families and Children, an initiative of the National Governors' Association and other organizations, is one attempt to support more collaborative planning. So is the joint planning for children that involves family support centers, child welfare services, and early childhood services in states such as Colorado, Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, West Virginia, Oregon, Indiana, and Minnesota. (Some of the major national foundations have given support and guidance to innovative efforts such as these; though, as with federal legislation, many foundation-supported initiatives reconfirm the categorical nature of services.) And at the community level, the Austin Project in Texas[11] and United Way's Success By

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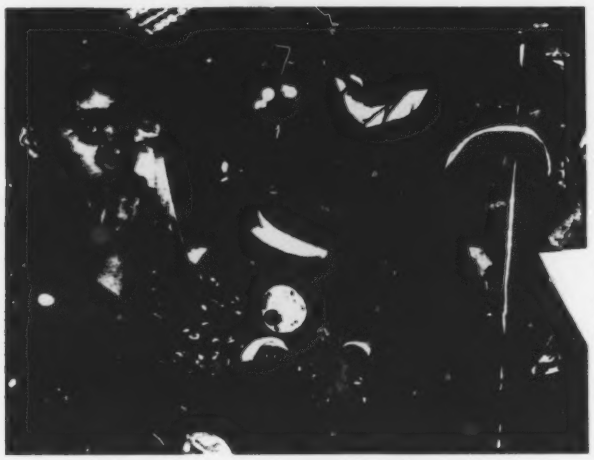

Photo courtesy of the Children's Aid Society, Philadelphia, PA, on behalf of the Family Health and Parenting Partnership (published in part in)

Six are examples of community planning for the early years. Some of these initiatives focus more on administrative change, others on change at the case level.[12] The initiators of all these efforts have broadened the spectrum of agencies working together.

What is particularly exciting is that some of these initiatives are beginning to bring people concerned with economic development, "reinventing government," job creation, crime prevention, and community action into the same room with people who design and administer, and even receive, services for young families. Communication among them is often difficult; but it is beginning to happen. The task now for these planners, whether liberal or conservative, should be to think in terms of what *all* families should have, as nurturers and breadwinners—and how they can appropriately mix the resources of families with public and private charitable resources to suit each family.

Will anything like this actually happen? The notion of general family policy seems a very difficult one for Americans to accept. Similarly, the phrase, "comprehensive services" provokes little more than a yawn. But the fact that infancy is an important period of life was also met with little acceptance some 20 years ago. So did the proposition that public facilities should be designed for the convenience of non-smokers, rather than smokers. We are already seeing the beginning of mechanisms for "vertical collaboration," by which change at one level of government is facilitated and supported at another. However, major attitudinal, systemic, financial, and technical barriers remain as we enter an era in which funds will be block-granted to states, with few strings attached.

All of us who care about families must work much harder on educating the media and the public at large as to the importance and promise of systemic changes in the way we care for infants and toddlers and support their families. We need to help them focus less on potential or actual scandals of the bureaucratic process and more on the accountability of providers and funders for ultimate outcomes for babies and their families, recognizing the need for local variation and flexibility in achieving those outcomes.[13] Perhaps a few fables, together with the tens of thousands of real stories our families could tell, will inspire this effort. It is essential that the public's clear frustration with the way government now operates not be translated into fury with the unfortunate recipients of our present categorical services. All sense that the old path is too often wasteful and ineffective. All must come to realize that a newer path is filled with challenge and promise well into the next century.

Dr. Eleanor Stokes Szanton is President of Consulting for Infants and Toddlers. For 15 years she was Executive Director of the national organization Zero to Three. She was a founding member of the Family Resource Coalition Board of Directors, and served from 1982 to 1990.

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Family Support in Cyberspace?

Circulating on the Multimedia and Telecommunications Highway

by Wendy Deutelbaum

"With this spark, thanks to science, the whole world is now aflame. Time and space are practically annihilated; night is turned into day; social life is almost revolutionized, and scores of things which only a few years ago would have been pronounced impossible are being accomplished daily."

—T. C. Mendenhall, president of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, in a retirement speech extolling the electric light, 1890.[1]

A Brave New World

One hundred years after Mendenhall praised the electric light, I watched the space-ship Apollo land on the moon in a corner of my computer screen, heard Edison's recording of Walt Whitman's voice come through my desk-top speakers, and observed my eight-year-old nephew click his cursor on a snow leopard to discover its haunts on a CD-ROM called *Animals!* While my reaction to these incidents was not as utopian as Mendenhall's reaction to the light bulb, I was nonetheless entranced.

New communication media such as e-mail on the Internet and the weekly news digest on HandsNet[2] have made it easier than ever to collaborate with colleagues, collect information from strangers who become electronic acquaintances, and leave messages that our far-away children, on-line at college, can respond to at their convenience.

Imagine students learning at their own rate; adults able to access parenting classes, job training, and employment information; citizens building together—out of body and across differences—diverse new communities. Imagine electronic "networking" with strangers with whom we can exchange thoughts, sounds, and images. We seem, once again, to have re-invented ourselves through a device that increases our collective creativity, enlarges our sense of connection, and extends our compassion.

And yet it would be foolish not to be concerned as well as elated. Who will have access to these technological developments? Which groups will have the power, authority, knowledge, and resources to speak through them? And what effects will these inventions have on familiar social and class structures?

Interactivity, Systems Thinking, and the Social Services

With the fear and fascination of those who first encountered the telegraph, telephone, and electric light in the last quarter of the 19th century and the radio, microphone, loudspeaker, tape recorder, and television in the first half of the 20th century, we now face the media of virtual reality and cyberspace. Since in the human services we are not only the passive recipients of technological culture but also its critics and creators, we must try to articulate what we want these tools to do for us.

Before suggesting a few answers, it seems worthwhile to recognize that this technology is more a familiar face than an alien being. Although I have emphasized the brave newness of multimedia computing, computers and the paradigms that produced them *already* permeate the lives of providers of human services. We have come to depend on, and embrace, computerized data collection and the quantitative evaluations which influence decisions in courts of law and legislatures, foundations, university research programs, and institutes of social policy.

At a less obvious level, our very way of thinking about social sciences and social services has been shaped by "systems thinking," a set of general principles that developed over the course of the 20th century from physics, engineering, biology, and mathematics. This conceptual framework sees patterns of change, explains Peter Senge in *The Fifth Discipline*, rather than static snapshots.[3] It identifies complex multiple interrelationships rather than chains of linear cause-effect. Indeed, our human services discussions are generated by systems thinking every time we:

- focus on the "whole" child, on children's behavior in the context of their family system, and on the importance of thriving communities for families' well-being;
- draw parallels between how management treats staff and how staff treat families;
- recommend interagency collaboration as an antidote to system fragmentation and require that assessment relate to "outcomes" rather than service units;
- stress the importance of "feedback" mechanisms in establishing personal and organizational goals;
- predict resistance to change and decry short-term, symptomatic solutions instead of longer-term responses to underlying causes; and
- create consensus for shared organizational visions.

It is no wonder that service integration, collaborative case management, and interactive technology appear on the same stage. They're actors, playing complementary roles in a drama written by our desire to recognize deeper patterns behind disparate events and details.

A Virtual Service System

"How will the new technology affect human services?" we might ask. That question assumes the influence will be one-way, and invites us to celebrate or decry it. A more "systemic" question would be to ask how technology and thinking in the social services will reciprocally influence each other. Perhaps the best answer is to report on how people are integrating services and software right now. By and large, network and multimedia software experimenters are seeking to improve services by encouraging collaboration and by offering consumers more direct access to information. Within this broad range of purpose, however, it is possible to distinguish certain emphases in design, accessibility, and philosophy.

One ambitious undertaking is the Community Services Workstation (CSW) project, a partnership among the Health and Human Services Coalition of the District of Columbia (consisting of 40 public and private health agencies and service providers), Howard University School of Social Work, Rice University, Baylor College of Medicine, Macro International Inc., United Seniors Health Cooperative, and Bell Atlantic Corporation. Computer work stations with capacities for text, graphics, audio, still image, and digital video link agencies in the Washington, D.C., area via e-mail, calendars, scanning, faxing, video conferencing, and bulletin boards. Similar collaborations exist in several other areas, and are in the works in another six nationwide.

Staff members at participating agencies can call up a client's history, genogram, or ecomap; exchange file information; make an appointment for a client with another provider; and tap into a "What If?" function for procedural advice. The Benefits Outreach screening software automatically searches for entitlement programs based on the client's situation. The goal of the program, according to Macro International's project manager Joe Eaglin, is to "create one-stop shopping for health and social services" and "expand front-line workers' capacity to respond to families with multiple needs."[4]

While the CSW project represents a large and technically sophisticated system, similar experiments are occurring elsewhere. Fast Forward, funded by the McKnight Foundation, serves economically disadvantaged families in Dakota County, Minnesota. A network links the Dakota County mainframe computer to eight private agencies that serve senior citizens, and more than 30 school districts and private agencies that provide early childhood services. Staff members use laptop computers on home visits and can dial into an Information and Referral database, a Crisis Advisory software system that matches a family's situation with the resources it needs, and a case-management system that keeps records and tracks families' self-sufficiency plans.[5]

A final example of interactive technology in human services are the touch-screen information kiosks located in shopping malls and other high-traffic areas in Hawaii, California, and Colorado. These kiosks allow residents to obtain information in several languages about government services.[6]

Putting Family Support Principles Into Multimedia Form

In "Consumer-Centered Social Work Practice: Restoring Client Self-Determination," Kristine Tower argues that in the 1990s, consumers are challenging professional dominance in the human services.[7] Many consumer groups support the family support tenet that individuals with direct experience of particular life conditions often know more about their needs and interests than providers can. They contend that redefining a client's role from recipient of goods and services to resourceful consumer elevates his or her sense of control and direction.

Broad Base, a team of social service reformers, software writers, artists, and consumers, is also concerned with empowerment, human services, and interactive technology. Their vision is to create a national, neighborhood-based network of public-access computers connected to local providers and to community information that is maintained locally. Because Broad Base hopes to provide a sanctuary for all kinds of people, the family of programs it is developing is called NOAH (Network of Advocates and Helpers).

From the **perspective of citizens**, NOAH will provide a world of information, support, and camaraderie. Information about health, employment, social services, and culture will be accurate, up to date, and easy to access. Those who wish to apply for particular services can enter the necessary data themselves, then have NOAH fax their information to agencies in the community. On-line, citizens can meet with others who face similar challenges or access multimedia stories told by people in similar situations. People can create an autobiography, a narrative that also serves as a planning and goal-setting tool, or have NOAH produce a resumé, budget, or will. They can exchange e-mail, participate in public discussions, seek advice from an on-line Council of Elders, and make recommendations about how community services might be improved.

From the **perspective of social services**, NOAH will enhance service delivery by automating and consolidating the information and referral process, and some portions of the assessment and case management processes. This "junior family support" function will free up front-line staff from routine tasks so that they can spend more time with those needing intensive support.

Citizens will sit at a kiosk that has been carefully designed to ensure privacy. A series of multi-lingual, multi-cultural, and multi-generational computerized guides will help them learn how to navigate the touch-screen software. Live, on-line help will be available at the touch of a button, connecting users to switchboard operators at local community information hubs. NOAH's six programs are:

- Noah's Guide, an easy-to-navigate directory of local and national resources
- Tell Noah Your Story, an encrypted personal database that NOAH will forward to service providers upon citizens' release of information
- Noah's Compass, a program that helps users chart their course by providing assessment, envisioning, and planning tools. Noah's Compass can be used again and again to adjust a course as goals or circumstances change.
- Noah's Ark, an on-line network of people in the community, as well as social service providers and policymakers. It's a place to anonymously meet others in the same boat and find shelter during the journey. On-line forums will encourage neighborhood-building, economic alliances, and conversations on topics determined by users.
- Noah's Archive, a collection of multimedia stories of people who have faced a variety of challenges and have found successful and inspiring ways to deal with them.

- Noah's Notebook, a program for service providers that contains an anonymous extract of the data collected by the Interview and Compass programs, with an easy-to-use report writer that will allow agencies to select, sort, and lay out data in any way they choose. Noah's Notebook will automatically generate bar charts, line graphs, and pie charts and export results to word processors, desk-top publishers, spread sheets, and many other applications.

NOAH programs are based on the belief that people have an ability to do things for themselves: given the means, they can locate information, assess their needs, and develop a vision and plan realistic steps to achieving it. The programs emphasize story-telling as a mode of empowerment and communication and exemplify a developmental rather than a deficit-oriented approach. While the kiosk and programs offer a greater degree of privacy than face-to-face exchanges and thus remove a layer of judgement, we expect many will want to use them in concert with their counselors, informal helpers, or family members.

Once on Noah's Ark, people can control how they present themselves; find opportunities to cross boundaries of class, gender, and race; and exchange information, expertise, and support within a ready-made virtual community. Although it may sound like a utopian dream, such an on-line community has been a daily fact in the lives of hundreds of subscribers to the WELL's Parenting Conference.[8] This short exchange conveys a sense of how quickly a network can build a web of concern:

> *Topic 349: Leukemia.*
> *By: Phil Catalfo (philcat) on Wed, Jan 16, '91 (17:21)*
> I'd like to use this topic for discussing leukemia, the disease, both as it affects my family and what is known about it generally. We learned early last week that our son Gabriel, 7 (our middle child) has acute lymphocytic leukemia, aka ALL. I will be opening one or more additional topics to discuss the chronology of events, emotions and experiences stirred up by this newly central fact of our lives ... The first thing I want to say, regardless of how it does or doesn't pertain to this particular topic, is that the support and love my family and I, and especially Gabe, have been receiving from the WELL, have been invaluable ...
>
> *#1: Nancy A. Pietrafesa (lapeche) Wed, Jan 16, '91 (19:09)*
> Philcat, we're here and we're listening. We share your hope and a small part of your pain. Hang on. [22]

Broad Base expects the Ark to provide endless opportunities for exchanges such as these, and in so doing, to support families; foster preventative, coordinated, and timely responses by the network of social service agencies, community-based programs, and health clinics; and link libraries, schools, businesses, and religious institutions.

Technology: A Fact of Life

Many important questions remain. Some are *technical*: How will local systems connect to fiber-optic networks, and what's the best way to handle long-distance fees for on-line bulletin boards? Some deal with *practice*: In the new triad of program participant–program worker–computer, what are the most desirable roles and responsibilities for each partner? How can multimedia computing most effectively contribute to staff training? What database standard would most readily encourage the creation of a national database of community resources? Other questions are ultimately *political*: Who will pay for training people how to function and prosper in the new virtual communities?[9] How can we convince Congress and the administration to adopt as a national goal universal access to the information highway for every home and business in America?[10]

New technologies have always evoked both fear and fascination, dreams of betterment and visions of abuse. Electric lights and telephones, for example, were at different moments presented as a herald of democracy and as a superior means for controlling criminals, primitives, servants, and other members of the underclass.[11] It is not difficult to envision a dark side to multimedia computing: it could enhance the advantages of the elite; be seized, censored, and metered by big business; and allow government agencies to increasingly centralize, supervise, and penalize.

On the other hand, in the 1990s electric lights seem more a fact of life than a technological break-through: neither good nor bad, available to almost all, a helper rather than a threat. In 2090, if we are thoughtful about how we use computers to serve citizens and communities, we will likely feel the same way about them.

Wendy Deutelbaum, Ph.D., MSW, is President of Broad Base, Inc. She is also Co-Director of the Institute for Family Support and Development, a family therapist, and adjunct Associate Professor at the University of Iowa School of Social Work. Through Broad Base and the Institute for Family Support and Development, she and her colleagues provide family-centered consultation, training, and interactive technology to foundations, not-for-profit organizations, and government at all levels. She can be reached at Broad Base, 431 Brown Street, Iowa City, IA 52245, 319/338-2203.

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Joe Eaglin, Project Director at Macro International Inc., (1785 Beltsville Dr., Calverton, MD 20705-3119, can be contacted at 301/572-0200.

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Work/Life Retreats Help Families Find a Balance

by Bonnie Michaels and Carol Powers

What would you want your life to look like in five years, 10 years, 15 years?

How happy are you with the values and norms you have incorporated into your own life?

How do you define success?

What regrets do you have about the way you are living your life, things you wish you could change?

Answering questions such as these could be the first step toward achieving a balance among work, family, and other parts of our lives. At many workplaces, staff and administrators are searching for forums in which individuals and families can work toward such a balance.

One solution is to offer employees a weekend retreat for the entire family to work on skills and strategies together.

Work/Life Retreats: A New Opportunity

What is a Work/Life Retreat? It's an organized weekend (or several days) away from the worksite that brings families together to improve skills and develop support systems in order to find a better balance in their lives. The seminar content is based on the issues employees and their families want to address. Options include:

- Whole Life Planning
- Skills and role plays in conflict resolution
- Skills for communicating more effectively with spouse/significant other, children, elders, and others in your life
- Strategies for organizing time for self, spouse, family members, and friends
- Strategies for dealing with guilt
- Ways of developing a Family Mission
- Ways of staying healthy
- Support systems

A survey and/or set of focus groups beforehand make tailoring the content of the seminars to the specific needs of the individuals easier, allowing the attendees to get right to the core issues. Reading related text in the weeks leading up to the retreat can also save time. Before one Work/Life Retreat, we provided attendees with exercises in values clarification, setting priorities, and whole-life planning. We asked individuals to answer the questions listed at the beginning of this article and other questions that would put all of us on the right track for the retreat.

Involving Children

While many parents, especially those in their 20s and 30s, are engaged in their own developmental tasks—career-building, putting down roots, examining values, and searching for meaning—a child's emotional growth has its own time table. Often, the needs of the parents and the needs of the child are at odds. For example, it is difficult for a toddler to establish object constancy when parents are not available. Working and non-working parents can feel guilty when, physically or emotionally, they are not always available for their children.

These are some of the issues that can be addressed at a retreat, where there is time to explore solutions for what seem to be unsolvable situations.

If children are going to attend, it's important to set up special activities that both meet their needs and incorporate the goals of the retreat. One goal may be to help parents understand how their children perceive work.

Parents' busy schedules, many children's commitment to numerous structured activities, and everyone's home responsibilities make free, unstructured time hard to find. Add the intrusion of telephones, faxes, and Nintendo, and children's relational needs can easily become secondary. Creating an environment for relaxed play is important, for whatever the age and stage of development, play is the arena in which children master age-appropriate tasks.

To address these issues at a recent retreat, we organized an arts-and-crafts project that children four and older created with their parents. The results revealed the children's feelings about how their parents' work affected them, starting a dialogue that would assist the family in working together for a more balanced lifestyle and opening communication between parents and children.

Because it takes time to integrate new ideas and strategies, it is really helpful if the group can meet again for a short time within three months of the retreat. If bringing the group together isn't possible, the buddy system is an option. Buddies, chosen at the retreat, can keep in touch afterward to share how they are integrating changes and provide the feedback and support of someone who shared the retreat experience.

Participants often make comments such as:

"The best part of the weekend was learning that I'm not alone. Many people have the same conflicts as I do."
"I never thought I had any options."
"I didn't realize I could change my actions for better balance in my life."

Work/Life Retreats are good news for the employers who implement them, too. Feeling supported by the organization and being armed with new skills and strategies empowers employees, and has a positive effect on their attitudes and commitment to work.

Recent studies at Fel-Pro Inc. and Johnson & Johnson have shown that work/life programs can have a positive effect on morale, retention, and quality of work, which only makes sense. When workers feel in control of their personal lives, and they're working with their partners to keep a better balance, these factors will affect their work lives in a positive way. Individuals and companies need to work cooperatively to address work/life balance issues. Each family system and corporate culture is different and demands a unique approach. The Work/Life Retreat is just one example of a way to help put balance back into people's lives.

Bonnie Michaels is President of Managing Work & Family, Inc., a work/family consulting firm, and co-author of Solving the Work/Family Puzzle. *Carol Powers is a licensed clinical social worker in private practice as a therapist for individuals, couples, and families, and is a facilitator of Work/Life Retreats. For more information call 708/864-0926 or fax 708/475-2021.*

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Raise Your Legislator's Antenna

A Nuts-and-Bolts Guide to How (and Why) to Advocate for Families ... with Families

by Shelley Peck and Kathy Goetz

As a community-based program provider, you've got your hands full. Whether you run a welfare-to-work program, provide adult education or parenting classes, offer child development programs or childcare, or make it possible for families to navigate their way through the public service system, one thing is sure: there aren't enough hours in the day to provide families with all the support and services they need and deserve.

So who has time for legislative advocacy?

You—and the families who participate in your program—do.

As state and federal legislatures consider bill after bill that jeopardizes *your program* and *your community's families*, you can't afford not to get involved in advocating for family-friendly public policy.

What is Public Policy?

Public policy is the laws and programs that legislators—the people on the Hill or in your state congress—make, which govern us and the families in our communities. It may seem like lawmakers have all the power. But while we depend on them to create laws and programs that keep families strong, they depend on us for something else: votes. Your lawmakers care about what you, their constituents, have to say—because if they don't, they're out of office. Legislators spend literally most of their time thinking about how they can please people like you.

Right now the people that are speaking the loudest to lawmakers are not those who are advocating for programs to strengthen and support families.

What is Advocacy?

Advocacy is promoting the interests of a group (in your case, the families in your community) among lawmakers. Its goal is to get policies passed that serve the interests of that group.

The good news is you don't need to wear a three-piece suit or be a well-paid, politically connected lobbyist to influence the laws and programs that affect your community. You don't even have to know the details of the legislative process. The best kind of advocacy is finding out who represents you and, in partnership with the families in your program, telling (or showing) that person what you, as a community-based family support advocates, are more qualified than anyone else to describe: who the families in your community are, and why they are best served by preventive, strengths-building services and supports. Too many who are responsible for making the rules never see what you see, hear what you hear, or know what you know. It's up to you to tell them.

What can you accomplish through advocacy? You can build a relationship with your legislators, to raise their "antenna" about issues that affect families. You want a picture of the families in your community to pop up in your representative's

mind whenever a law or program is discussed that will affect your community.

Involving Parents

Community-based program providers committed to parent and community empowerment can and should advocate for families, **with families**. There are lots of reasons to involve parents in the advocacy process.

1. Parents can be their own best advocates and the most effective spokespersons for their needs. The most powerful testimony about the difference family support programs can make in people's lives will come from those who have benefited. Similarly, the most persuasive picture of a community's needs will be drawn by those living—and struggling—in a community.

2. Advocacy really is a more-the-merrier activity. As the number of advocates increases, so the impact and effectiveness of those advocates. Teaming up with parents can multiply your capacity to protect and increase the availability of family support programs in communities a hundred-fold.

3. Working with parents is an important way to further your mission and your goals. As an excellent family support program, you seek to establish relationships of equality and respect with parents, and you attempt to engage them as partners. Most family support programs facilitate parents' ability to serve as resources to each other, to participate in program decisions and governance, and **to advocate for themselves in the broader community**.

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A Step-By-Step Guide to Advocacy

In the case of advocating for public policies that are good for families and for family support programs, parents and program staff clearly have common interests and goals. Learning together how to become better advocates inevitably offers opportunities to strengthen your relationship with the families participating in your program, and to build that fundamental partnership.

This how-to guide is FRC's first tool for helping program staff and parents team up in order to communicate with and educate political institutions and elected officials. Although it focuses on working with the federal Congress, the same principles apply to state houses and legislatures, city councils, and county commissions.

Call the Family Resource Coalition for more tips, encouragement, and information to help get you started.

What's the Occasion?

When is it appropriate to contact your representative? Anytime. Certain times are strategically "hot" because of approaching legislation, and there are ways of finding out what's in the hopper. You can call FRC to find out the names of advocacy organizations that monitor your state's legislation, and you can keep your eyes open for FRC's *Policy Beat*, a newsletter that the Coalition sends to members when federal legislation developments affect family support programs. You know what issues affect your community. If many of the families in your community use food stamps, for example, watch out for pending programs that would affect food stamps.

But a sure-fire way to advocate for families any time is to use the methods described below to tell your representatives how your program works for families—and what would happen to your community if funding to programs such as yours were cut.

1. Form an Advocacy Team

The first step is to get together with what will become the nucleus of your new advocacy team. As with any new project, you'll need to talk it up while assessing and generating enthusiasm and interest. Some parents and staff will immediately understand the power and importance of advocacy and will be excited about participating from the outset. These people can help convince other parents and staff of the value of investing time in advocacy efforts; they'll underscore the real possibility of success. You'll need to schedule a preliminary meeting to discuss the issues your community faces and to get started on a strategy for getting public officials to help you address them. Meetings of the advocacy team are good opportunities to brainstorm creative ideas and figure out how to implement them, including dividing the work realistically.

2. Find Out Who Represents You

Someone on your advocacy team will need to call your community's voter registrar, the local Democratic or Republican party headquarters, or your local League of Women Voters to find out about your state and local reps. To learn who represents you in Washington, call Capitol Hill Information at the numbers below and provide your zip code.

Senate operator: (202) 224-3121

House operator: (202) 225-3121

PLUS ...

Find out about your representatives' personal histories. Does he or she have young children at home? Has your rep ever worked with families and children as a school teacher, minister, health care provider, etc.—or does he or she have a spouse that does? Do any two of you belong to the same religious denomination, community group, or civic club? These things may make him or her sympathetic to your point of view.

You can find such information in the *Almanac of American Politics* and other books in your library or bookstore.

3. Meet With Your Lawmakers

The most effective way to influence policymaking decisions is to get to know your legislators and their staff personally so that they may better understand what you represent. Anyone can make an appointment to see his or her legislator. You can schedule a meeting to discuss a particular piece of legislation or just to generally educate that lawmaker about family support or your particular program or organization. Here are a few pointers to make your meeting effective:

- **Make an appointment in advance.**

Call your lawmaker's local office. Say that you would appreciate the opportunity to meet with the lawmaker the next time he or she is in town, and state the subject you wish to discuss. It is often possible to get an appointment for a Friday afternoon or Saturday morning. If the legislator isn't due home again for a long while, or if he or she already has a full schedule, ask to meet with the staff person who works on family issues. Staffers generally are more accessible and have a great need for information to enable them to advise legislators properly.

- **Prepare.**

Plan a short presentation before your meeting. Have your advocacy team decide who in the group will represent them at this meeting. One person can go alone, or you may want to designate two or three: a least one parent and one program staffer.

Agree in advance who will do the talking and what approach you will use. Collect or prepare information that may be helpful to the representative or staff person:

- Literature about your organization and what you do
- Relevant articles from the local newspaper
- Statistics you have collected about your community and its families
- Fact sheets about legislation you are asking the legislator to support or oppose
- Related FRC materials (call FRC for more information)
- A business card or some other material with your name and address on it

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- **Talk about what you know.**

The most important thing you can do is to share your own expertise with the legislator or staff person. Program staff can describe how the principles of the family support movement are put into practice at their agency. They can talk about the families they see and work with in a typical day. Parents can talk about the program's impact on their lives and discuss the special challenges that you and your neighbors experience raising children today. Talk about the resources your community has and does not have for ensuring that the children and families who live there are strong and healthy.

- **Be specific as possible about the action you want from the legislator.**

Describe the legislator's role in promoting family support programs and practices. If you want him or her to support or oppose a proposal, say so. Relate how that proposal would negatively or positively affect the families you know.

- **Encourage questions.**

Answer factually and not argumentatively. Don't worry if you don't know the answer to every question. It is much better to say you don't know and offer to get the correct information than to give an incorrect answer.

- **Listen carefully.**

Let your legislator or the staff person share his or her views on the subject. If you do not agree, listening carefully will make you familiar with his or her arguments so that you can refute them with additional facts or personal knowledge, either at the meeting or in a follow- up letter.

- **Leave promptly.**

At the end of the time allotted, thank the legislator or staff person for her or his time and courtesy and then leave.

- **Follow up.**

Send a thank-you for the meeting when you get home. Enclose any information you promised to send or provide additional arguments to support your viewpoint.

3. Invite them to a site visit.

Because the look and feel of the family support movement varies widely from community to community, politicians and others often don't "get it" until they see it. The best way to educate your legislators about the necessity of a preventive, family-supportive approach to services is to invite them to see first-hand how the principles of family support translate into practices in your community. Use a site visit as an opportunity to let them see what your program is doing. Let them hear directly from parents and front-line workers.

Call your legislator's local office to arrange a visit. Offer to invite members of the local press as well. It could be good publicity opportunity for both your program and the legislator, and a chance to educate members of press about family support.

4. Write a letter

Without a doubt, politicians read and count their mail. If you ever wondered if a single letter can make a difference, don't. Most state legislators consider 15 letters on any single topic "a lot." For federal legislators, a few dozen letters feels like an avalanche. So why not incorporate letter writing into your program activities? Writing letters could be incorporated into a family literacy or G.E.D. program. You could also set up a letter-writing table at a social event. Facilitate the process by providing pens, paper, envelopes, and stamps. Rely on your advocacy team to generate other creative ideas.

Personalized, handwritten letters on stationery are the most effective. Form letters, postcards, and petitions are read and counted, but don't carry the weight that a personal letter from a constituent does. Try to keep letters as simple and clear as possible, and follow these pointers:

- **Be brief.**

Write only one or two pages. Legislators and their staff are busy, and anything longer may not be read carefully. Limiting yourself to commenting on just one bill or topic is helpful. Write two different letters if you wish to comment on two different subjects.

- **Be specific.**

State the action you want your legislator to take in the very first paragraph. If you want a yes or no vote on a bill, say so. ("I urge you to vote for H.R. 1 ...") If you want to relay opinions and information, do it. ("At the family resource center where I have worked for five years, I have learned much about the hopes, dreams, and struggles of low-income families who live in [your district]. Because of those experiences, I am writing to express my strong concerns about welfare reform legislation currently being debated in Congress ...") or ("As the working

Families Get Their School Bus—FDP Parents' Campaign Nets Concrete Results

When the families participating in the University of New Mexico's Family Development Program (FDP) lost school bus services due to a city shortfall, they wanted to voice their objections. Some wanted to surprise the city council at their next meeting by marching in mass, petitions in hand, to demand that service be restored.

But other community members, including FDP staff, who had been invited to give their input at a community meeting, raised some questions. Would surprising the council really help parents' cause? What if council members reacted negatively to the "big fuss" approach? What if they just needed more information to make the right decision?

Parents decided that the march to city hall should be peaceful, and that they would tell the city council of their plans as soon as possible. This would allow the city council to search for solutions prior to the meeting.

Families and staff discussed the plan in depth and determined everyone's role in carrying it out. Staff would draft the petitions, parents would visit all their neighbors and gather signatures, and still other parents would make signs for the march—in which parents, children, and staff would participate. A letter was drafted to apprise city hall of FDP's intentions. In the process each person learned much about the others' strengths, and about the strategic planning necessary to carry out a grassroots advocacy campaign.

After the march—which drew much media attention—and the parents' subsequent testimony at city hall, the city council restored bus service for that year. Also, they suggested that parents submit a proposal for the preschools run by FDP during the city's next funding cycle. FDP followed the council's recommendation and received funding, and continues to receive money from the City each year.

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mother of two small girls, living in [your district]. I am writing to express my strong concerns about welfare reform legislation currently being debated in Congress"). If you want the legislator to cosponsor a bill or support a specific strategy, identify it. ("I urge you to do everything you can to end the filibuster that is preventing a vote on S.B. 1 ...")

- **Use personal experiences and facts.**

State how the legislation or action will affect your own family and/or the families with whom you work or who reside in your community. If you have data, use it, especially if it documents how the decision affects the legislator's constituents ("At the family resource center where I work, more than 80 percent of the families receive food stamps. I believe the bill under consideration would affect those families in the following ways ...") or ("I am writing on behalf of my children and all of the other children in our community. More than 80 percent of us rely on food stamps to feed our families. I believe the bill under consideration would affect us in the following ways ...").

- **Start with a positive attitude.**

Legislators, like you and I, respond better to politeness and praise than to anger and criticism. Remind them how you have supported them in the past (if you did) and how you are counting on them. Remember, legislators need votes in order to keep their job, and they have an interest in keeping their constituents satisfied. Voting and being involved in the political process gives you clout in a legislator's eyes. Use this clout in your letters.

- **Neatness counts.**

Write neatly and put your name and address on both the letter and the envelope. In case the letter gets separated from the envelope, your legislator will still be able to reply.

You can obtain the mailing addresses of governors and state legislators from your local voter registrar or League of Women Voters. When writing to federal lawmakers, use the following forms of address and salutation:

To the President or Vice President:
The President *or* The Vice President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500
Dear Mr. President *or* Dear Mr. Vice President:

To Senators:
The Honorable *[full name]*
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510
Dear Senator *[full name]*

To Representatives:
The Honorable *[full name]*
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515
Dear Representative *[full name]*

5. Pick up the phone

A telephone call to a legislator's local or Washington, D.C., office cannot take the place of a letter, but it can serve as an emphatic follow-up or a quick way of informing a lawmaker of your opinion.

Telephoning is most effective during the 48 hours that precedes a vote. This is when many highly organized groups and movements utilize telephone trees to get a large number of phone calls into a legislator's office. Your advocacy team could assemble one of these telephone trees. Lawmakers and their staff cannot help but get the message from a constantly ringing telephone. A few hours of steady rings have been known to change the response from, "Thank you for calling," to "Representative so-and-so is definitely backing that measure."

You can reach your Senators through the Senate switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and your Representatives through the House switchboard at (202) 225-3121. To find the numbers for your legislators' local offices, call your local Democratic or Republican party headquarters, the League of Women Voters, or directory assistance.

When calling, give your name, address, and a brief message, such as "Vote yes on H.R. 1."

6. Organize others

If several letters, telephone calls, or personal meetings are helpful, then imagine how effective many letters or calls or meetings can be. Contact a group of like-minded professionals, parents, religious groups, agency staff, or organizations. Then involve them in your advocacy team.

Justice RAINS in South Miami Beach—RAINMAKERS Parents Challenge Unfair Housing Policies

Ten years ago South Miami Beach welcomed recent immigrants of Cuba and South and Central America and others with little money. Rent was inexpensive and although most of the apartments were small, families found housing easily.

But in 1990 family advocates at Fienberg-Fisher Elementary School's Healthy Learners' Project noticed that more and more parents were coming to them with problems caused by lack of housing. Parents and staff felt they had to do something about it. RAINMAKERS, a group made up of Fienberg-Fisher parents who receive training in parent advocacy, was the perfect vehicle.

Their first priority was to measure how bad the housing crunch really was. Parents split up, 10 to each neighborhood, and interviewed landlords about their policies. No wonder families were complaining: rents were skyrocketing, landlords were rejecting families with children, and the pool of affordable housing had drastically diminished.

Armed with statistics, they applied for federal funding so that Legal Services of Greater Miami could co-locate with the Fienberg-Fisher school. The Legal Services attorney counseled them on how to bring their concerns to the Miami Beach Board of Commissioners and get results: an extension of the 15-day eviction notice to 30 days. The group had started out demanding rent control; their strategy of asking for more than they could get, and then "settling" for less, worked.

Other victories followed: a traffic light at a busy intersection near the school (also good publicity for the city Commissioners who authorized it); a school-located, parent-run childcare program funded by the Danforth Foundation; and a Head Start program.

It has taken a few years for lawmakers and the parents themselves to realize parents have a right to advocate for their families' needs in the policy arena. But now RAINMAKERS regularly mobilizes up to 60 parents, children and youth, and elderly people for Commission meetings when demolitions and evictions are scheduled, and one of its veterans, Teresa Martiato, regularly counsels the Commission on housing and parents' issues. Former Healthy Learners' Project Family Advocate Tania Alameda says the parents know it doesn't matter how loud they talk, just how consistent they are.

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- **Arrange a group meeting.**
Arrange for a diverse cross-section of parents and others from the community to meet your legislators.

- **Launch a letter-writing campaign.**
Ask everyone in your agency, parent group, or coalition to write a letter. Set a goal for the number of letters you want the legislator to receive, and don't stop until you've reached that goal. Avoid form letters and petitions. Facilitate the process by providing pens, paper, envelopes, and stamps.

- **Organize a telephone tree.**
When there isn't time to write a letter, a telephone call—or even better, a continuous stream of telephone calls—has been known to persuade a wavering legislator. You can organize your group, agency, or coalition for such events beforehand by developing a telephone tree. Working much like a chain letter, a telephone tree ensures dozens of calls to a legislator's office without any single person having to make more than three or four calls. Designate a lead person to activate the system before crucial votes. That person calls his or her legislator, and then calls three or four others on the tree. Those others then call the same legislator, and then call three or four others, and so on.

- **Reach other voters through the media.**
You can multiply the impact of your letters, calls, and visits to legislators with just a little bit more time and energy by using the media. Turn your letter to a legislator into a letter to the editor of your local newspaper. Use the same message you conveyed in a call or meeting with a lawmaker to reach the audience of a radio call-in show or the editor or editorial board of your newspaper (use the "Meet With Your Lawmakers" pointers, above).

Letter-Writing Empowers Rhode Island Parents—Members of Congress Know All About HIPPY

Parents in Rhode Island met with success on the federal level with a letter-writing campaign to their Senators and Representatives, spearheaded by the national office of HIPPY (Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters) and organized by the state's HIPPY office.

The 140 Rhode Island parents who wrote letters encouraging their Senators and Representatives not to cut Title IV funding for Parental Assistance were excited when they all got responses from the lawmakers' offices. And soon after, staff at their HIPPY program received a Request for Proposals asking them to apply for Title IV funds, which, if granted, would allow the program to open a Parent Information Center. The parents also were writing to urge Members of Congress to vote against welfare reform legislation that would negatively impact poor families.

Parents' level of interest in what was going on on the Hill skyrocketed; many of them now pick up the federal policy section of newspaper or turn up the radio or television when legislation that would impact families and children is in the news.

Just as important, the campaign raised the awareness of their Members of Congress about families' needs and concerns: when Rhode Island HIPPY Director Mary Doyle was introduced to Senator Patrick Kennedy recently, he immediately recalled all those letters from HIPPY parents.

In their responses to parents, the Members of Congress commended them for caring so much about their children's education and praised HIPPY as a program that would help create a bright future for children.

"It was very easy to coordinate," said Doyle. Staff distributed 200 pre-addressed letters (they received a template from HIPPY USA) at parent meetings; the program's paraprofessional staff also distributed letters while on home visits. Many parents simply completed and mailed the form letter, but some personalized it with their own text. "Now there's a whole cadre of parents ready to write letters whenever it's necessary," said Doyle. "We'll probably do another campaign this fall."

The Pay-Off

Advocacy works. Public education and advocacy efforts can change the way America works for families by encouraging a government that makes family and youth needs (including economic security, adequate housing, and the viability and safety of every community) a priority. The time and energy you and like-minded others invest in building relationships with policymakers and educating lawmakers can pay off in public policies that help to strengthen and support families and communities. Advocacy is more than a way to be heard—it is the way to make government responsive to the needs of children, youth, and families.

Advocacy work has other smaller-scale, concrete benefits for your community and your program as well:

- Engaging in advocacy efforts helps build your image in the community by showing your program playing a role in supporting all families.

- Advocacy is a chance for you to educate the general public (not just lawmakers) about your work, perhaps increasing funding for and community participation in your programming.

- Joining with parents, family advocates, and other program providers to advocate for families provides opportunities to enhance your relationships with community institutions—relationships that can have many other benefits.

- For families being involved in advocacy efforts it can be empowering. If your program strives to help families realize their power to set their own priorities and pursue their own goals in their lives and in running the program, advocacy can extend that empowerment to their community, city, and state—and beyond!

Advocacy requires some hard work, some creativity, and some vision, but more than anything else, it requires the conviction that the world should be changed and that together, we can do it.

Shelley Peck is Public Education and Advocacy Coordinator for the Family Resource Coalition. Kathy Goetz is Director of Communications and Publications for the Family Resource Coalition and Editor of the FRC Report. *For more information, contact FRC at 312/341-0900.*

Lobbying Rules for Tax-Exempt Nonprofits

You see big changes in the way family support programs could be funded. You want to give federal and state lawmakers the introduction they need to advocate for programs that strengthen and support families. But as a nonprofit, how can your agency make sure you're within the laws that regulate lobbying?

Below is a short and simple guide for tax-exempt groups whose activities include legislative advocacy by members, staff, or clients. The following description of federal rules applies to groups are tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the federal tax code. Be sure to check the laws in your state also. Some states have no additional restrictions, while others require registration of all charitable organizations that lobby frequently. Federally funded programs must also consider the additional, very strict limitations that generally bar the use of federal funds to lobby Congress or state legislatures.

1. Tax-exempt, private, nonprofit organizations can spend some of their resources lobbying Congress and state legislatures.

Within reasonable limits, you can:

- Write your members of Congress or state legislature on organization letterhead.
- Call long-distance to the Capitol at agency expense.
- Take a carload of people to the Capitol to meet a legislator or staff and get mileage paid by the agency.
- Engage in other activities generally considered "lobbying" or "grassroots lobbying."

The limits are:

- If the IRS is informed in advance, and certain simple forms are filed, small agencies can spend up to 15 to 20 percent of the agency's total resources on lobbying. If the organization's budget exceeds $1 million per year, the 15-to-20-percent figure decreases according to a formula. If you do not file the forms, your agency is still allowed to spend up to about five percent of its resources on lobbying, which permits most groups to do all the lobbying they need and want to do.
- There is a special, smaller limit on "grassroots" lobbying—lobbying whose purpose is to get the general public to contact legislators and ask them to act on a bill. It is capped at one-fourth of your overall lobbying limit.
- You must be able to show that no employees or clients were coerced into lobbying.

2. Under IRS rules, the following activities are not even considered lobbying. You are permitted to:

- If you are a membership organization, inform your members (not the general public) of legislative issues critical to the goals of the agency and take positions on them (but telling people to write to Congress is considered lobbying).
- Research and conduct nonpartisan analyses of legislation and state your position on such issues in the analysis, as long as you give complete information so that people can draw their own conclusions.
- Invite legislators or their staff to visit your program to learn about your work or explain current legislative efforts.
- Attend workshops on how to lobby, generally.
- Respond to official written requests by legislative bodies for advice or testimony.

As a private citizen, you can:

- Work on legislative issues during lunch hours or after work. In public, you should state explicitly that you are speaking as a private citizen, although your argument can be based partly on your experience with the agency.
- Put bumper stickers on your personal car, even if it is used in business.
- Participate on your own time in other groups that actively discuss politics and issues and lobby in those groups' names.

Adapted from An Advocate's Guide to Lobbying and Political Activity for Nonprofits *(Children's Defense Fund, Washington, D.C., 1991; $5.95 postage-paid). To order, call CDF at 202/628-8787.*

The Family Academy:
Making Public School Work in Harlem

by Jacqueline Lalley

In 1991, three educators in New York City asked themselves a question: What kind of environment would afford kids from Harlem the same chance for success as a child in an affluent area?

The answer to that question is the Family Academy, a revolutionary public school on West 121st Street, where the school day lasts until 5:00 p.m. and the school year includes the summer; and on-site, integrated services and parent involvement are guiding principles.

The results show the Academy's high attendance rate and unusually high levels of reading ability (85 percent of its second-graders tested within two months of grade-level in a nationally standardized test). And the children work and play with the confidence that comes from a positive school experience, says co-founder Christina Giammalva.

In 1991 educators Giammalva, David Liben, and Meredith Liben made the move from New York Public School District Four, which embraced alternative schooling but did not have the funding to enhance all its schools, to District Three, which was new to the alternative schooling idea.

They looked at available models and decided that the school would have to provide a continuum of programs for children that wasn't interrupted at 3:00 or at the beginning of the summer; that depended upon and encouraged parents to be involved; and that provided a professional environment of shared accountability among faculty, other staff, and parents.

Those ideas translate into several major components to the Family Academy's curriculum, programs, and services:

• Child and Family Services Center

Located in the Academy, the Center employs a child psychologist, a family worker, and a learning specialist. The psychologist and the learning specialist conduct screenings for children as early as kindergarten, to help the Academy respond to each child's needs. They measure motor skills; language development; cognitive skills; and math, reading, and memory. Center staff can influence the Academy's policy and curriculum decisions to respond to trends they see in the screenings. They meet weekly with the faculty and the school's director, David Liben.

Parents complete a family profile and in-depth medical history at the Center. This way the family and staff can work together to identify potential and existing needs; the Academy also uses these profiles to glean an overall picture of the population it serves.

The family worker, who is available 24 hours a day by beeper, helps families navigate the public assistance and public housing systems, and provides them with referrals and information on legal aid, health care, drug rehabilitation, and foster care.

The family worker recently helped a family whose home burned down get to a shelter, and accompanied the mother on visits to social services providers, making sure they knew the urgency of the family's situation. The worker also made sure the kids stayed in school during the transition. Soon the whole family was settled in a large apartment. Other families at the Family Academy held a clothing drive and helped furnish the new home.

A crisis that would have meant leaving their community and their school for many families on public assistance was much less traumatic for this family.

• Extended School Day

During the traditional school year students are in classes until 5:00 p.m. The Academy's curriculum emphasizes a "love of learning," says Giammalva, and "doesn't forget the basics." Toward the end of the school day, children study less traditional subjects, such as chess, guitar-playing, and computer skills.

The Family Academy expects more of children than most public schools in the area, and offers them the kind of education they'll need in order to be competitive in the job market. By third grade, Academy kids are already talking excitedly about wanting to go to college.

• Extended School Year

Do kids really want to go to school in the summer? Yes, if it's the right kind of school. The Family Academy's atten-

dance rate during the summer is an impressive 80 percent.

During the summer, they continue to study language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies until noon; then, until 3:00, they participate in cultural and recreational activities—everything from nature walks and trips to zoos and museums, to sports and swimming lessons.

The school is part community, part academy. It has brought families together as they work not just to survive, but to thrive, in an increasingly violent area of the city. "The biggest parental complaint about the general public school system is that there's no learning going on—there's too much violence for anyone to concentrate on education," says Giammalva. At the Academy, "parents find it more possible to face the difficulties, because they know they're not alone." The school's high attendance indicates high levels of involvement and commitment among parents, who are the ones bringing the children to school.

Parents can meet, get to know each other, and build relationships in the Academy's Family Room; they can also study there. Parents take GED classes and workshops on health, parenting, and home management; and evening courses on computer science, literature, typing, dance, and aerobics at the Academy. The Academy has assisted 20 percent of its families in their job search.

About 75 percent of the families who attend the Academy receive public assistance, and 40 percent live in public housing. More than two-thirds of the parents are single, only 40 percent have completed high school, and one-third work outside the home. Twelve percent of Family Academy children live in foster care homes. The Academy's student body represents a cross-section of incomes and levels of ability and school performance.

City funding pays for the Family Academy's building, faculty salaries, books, and some supplies. But substantial private funding pays for the extended school-day and -year, the Child and Family Services Center, and adult education programs. The Academy began with just 50 kindergarten students. Each year it adds a new grade level; this fall 260 students will make up grades kindergarten through fourth. Continued growth of the school is fostered by a five-year funding commitment from a consortium of corporations. Motivated by the need for an educated, healthy work force, corporations also donate computers and other equipment and even their own employees, who volunteer as mentors and tutors.

Although it takes more money to run than other public schools, the Academy's preventive approach is cost-effective; each year New York City's dropouts cost the city $5.5 billion in lost wages and taxes.

Jacqueline Lalley is Assistant Editor of the FRC Report.

For more information, contact the Family Academy, 220 W. 121st St., New York, NY 10027, 212/749-3558 (phone), 212/749-1581 (fax).

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Listening to Local Programs:
Highlights of Year One of the Family Preservation and Support Services Program

by Nilofer Ahsan

By now most of us in the family support field know about the federal Family Preservation and Support Services Program (FPSSP). Passed in 1993 and slated to last five years, it has been hailed as one of the first attempts to formally include prevention and early intervention programs in state child welfare systems.

But how do local family support programs fit into this federal effort to change the system? Family Preservation and Support dollars were designed to spur states to create systems that are family-centered, work effectively with the other state support systems, provide a full continuum of services to meet the needs of children and families, and respond to the needs and priorities of communities and the individuals within those communities. Nearly two years after passage of the legislation, what has happened in communities as a result?

Community-based organizations, parents, representatives of professional and advocacy organizations, front-line workers, and representatives from other state agencies all were to take part in each state's planning for how to use its FPSSP dollars. Because meeting the Program's goals calls for substantially changing the structure of most current child welfare systems, the legislation funded states to conduct a full year of planning before they submitted a five-year time-line—planning that differs from tradition by being based on a comprehensive survey of the current system. States were encouraged to target funds toward building on communities' capacity to plan and make decisions about how services are to be delivered within their own boundaries; each state could to use up to one million dollars of its year-one allocation for planning.

A number of states responded to the new legislation by passing down some of the authority for planning and decision making directly to locally based planning bodies. These planning bodies ranged from county governments, to local provider boards, to planning and community governance boards that already existed or were newly convened.

Local planning bodies faced a number of significant challenges as well as opportunities as they worked to plan for their communities' implementation of the FPSSP. Because of the scope of the legislation and the emphasis on changing the larger system rather than simply adding on services, the timeframe for planning the FPSSP was extremely ambitious. At the community level—as at the state level—the process of collaboration takes time. The planning process brought to the table many groups that are traditionally left out of service planning, including parents, advocates, and program participants. As is often the case when disparate groups attempt to collaborate, particularly when money and services are at stake, community planners had to first break down barriers that mistrust, lack of knowledge, and competing interests had created.

The planning process brought to the table many groups that are traditionally left out of service planning, including parents, advocates, and program participants.

And states that gave authority for planning the initiative to their communities spent a considerable amount of time deciding which communities to target and how to work with them, establishing a state-level infrastructure for the planning phase, gathering information, setting state-level goals, and writing a mission statement. As a result, they often did not choose communities to participate until well into the planning period. Additionally, communities were required to turn in their plans early so that the state would have time to develop a cohesive plan that accounted for each community. Often this gave a community only three or four months to undertake the whole planning process; communities typically need four to six months to complete an assessment of community needs and resources—just one portion of a strategic planning process.

Some states responded to this time pressure by calling on planning groups that were already in place. Yet, even these existing planning bodies faced significant challenges. Often they had to reconfigure in order to consult with all segments of the community, gather additional information for a community assessment, and develop new areas of expertise in order to work across systems—all of which were necessary because the FPSSP planning was much more inclusive and comprehensive than many earlier planning efforts.

Maryland

The State of Maryland sent Local Planning Entities (LPEs) that already existed within the state a request for proposals to participate in the planning of the Family Preservation and Support Services initiative. Maryland's LPEs include representatives of all public agencies involved in service provision; up to 49 percent of LPE members can be private citizens, advocates, community leaders, and consumers of services. LPEs, which exist in 17 of the state's 24 jurisdictions, were developed as part of a larger systems reform effort begun in the state in 1989 to return children from out-of-home placement and develop family preservation programs within each jurisdiction. The FPSSP presented an opportunity for LPEs to expand their capacity to plan for a wider array of services. Each LPE was provided training and encouraged to do a complete assessment of its community to deter-

mine its priorities, needs, assets, and strengths. LPE members also were provided leadership training to increase the involvement and confidence of residents. Some strengths of Maryland's process were that the state:

In Maryland, each Local Planning Entity was encouraged to do a complete assessment of its community to determine its priorities, needs, assets, and strengths, and received leadership training to increase the involvement and confidence of residents.

- built on local planning efforts that already existed,
- funded communities to begin planning relatively early in the planning period,
- had experience with state-funded family preservation and family support initiatives, and
- provided significant support to each of the communities funded—including training and support from state staff and consultants.

Five counties in the Mid-Shore region formed a coalition and applied for and were awarded a planning grant. Three of the counties were then selected by the LPE to undertake planning. While each county undertook a separate planning process, the counties worked together and learned from each other. Each county was able to hire a planning consultant who was responsible for moving the planning process forward and coordinating planning committee development and information gathering. The contracts for these planning consultants end September 30, thus providing continuity beyond the June 30 end of the planning period and ensuring that the planning process is tied to implementation of the plan. The LPE has now chosen to fund the remaining two counties in the coalition with its discretionary funds.

Illinois

Illinois chose existing planning bodies called Local Area Networks (LANs) to carry out planning for the FPSSP. LANs originally had been created to coordinate service planning among mental health service providers, and later were expanded to include local providers of services for other state agencies, most notably the Illinois Departments of Children and Family Services and Alcohol and Substance Abuse and the Illinois State Board of Education. Nine LANs were chosen by the state to participate in the planning for the Family Preservation and Support Services dollars. The remaining 53 were given small grants to do an assessment of resources available within their LAN boundaries.

In LAN 80, a Chicago neighborhood, participation in the planning process was a real learning experience, for both the service providers and the parents and residents involved. At first, residents felt overwhelmed and unwelcome when they attended planning committee meetings. They felt that they hadn't been involved early enough, that the many acronyms and large amount of technical language being used hindered their participation, and that they weren't truly welcome at meetings. There were repeated conflicts about what parts of meetings residents could participate in, and what their overall role in the planning process was. Getting beyond this initial tension required some organizing and advocacy on resident parents' part and specific changes in procedures and policy on the part of the LAN. Resident groups began to meet independently, outside the planning meetings, and to be much more vocal and aggressive about their role in the process. While this activism caused tension in the meetings, it spurred more meaningful involvement of resident groups.

In Chicago, resident groups began to meet independently, outside the FPSSP planning meetings, and to be much more vocal and aggressive about their role in the process, spurring more meaningful involvement of community members.

The process of building off of or integrating existing planning efforts was important not only in Maryland and Illinois, but in other states that took that approach. In communities across the country, multiple local planning bodies operate in isolation. Often the same individuals are asked to participate in numerous committees—each planning on a different issue covering a different jurisdiction, and convened by a different agency. As a result, these parallel local planning efforts work at cross-purposes and in competition, rather than in collaboration. Adding yet another planning effort in these communities, without attempting to connect to existing ones, would only increase the duplication and confusion.

Some states responded to the challenge of working within a tight timeframe by committing to continue funding and working with the local planning bodies beyond the initial planning year. At least two counties in California adopted this strategy.

California

California provided planning dollars to every county in the state, based on population size. While this meant that every county undertook planning for the Family Preservation and Support Services Program, it also meant that many counties got very small sums of money, which had mixed results—the best being a real attempt to link across systems and reform initiatives in order to stretch the planning money. The planning processes undertaken by three California communities are described here.

In San Francisco County the planning process was extremely broad and inclusive, with over 150 people involved in the planning team. The high rate of participation allowed the planning

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committee to divide into subcommittees. The resulting plan was accordingly complex and inclusive. Planners created task forces that represented the interests and priorities of three minority populations within the community—Asian Americans, Latinos, and African Americans—that will continue to exist and advocate for change beyond the one-year planning phase of the FPSSP. The active involvement of representatives from minority populations within the community allowed for consensus building on community needs and priorities, which was reflected in the final proposal to build a family resource center in a largely African American community that was agreed to have the greatest need for these services.

Planners in San Francisco County created task forces that represent the interests and priorities of Asian Americans, Latinos, and African Americans. The task forces will continue to exist and advocate for change beyond the one-year planning phase of the FPSSP.

In Alameda County the planning process built on a number of existing reform efforts. These included California 1741, which is an effort to pool and blend funding for children and family services through state waivers; the County Policy Academy, a cross-disciplinary team charged with creating a vision for county child and family services; county efforts to implement the federal reform initiative Goals 2000; and the county-wide movement toward outcome-based budgeting. Again, the planning process was inclusive. The planning committee will continue to plan county services beyond the FPSSP and into the future.

Where it existed, a commitment to continue local planning committees' activities was very important; where it did not, many communities feared that they would be asked for input but nothing would change. In many states and communities, residents needed to be convinced of the specific impact they could have on the system and of the ongoing commitment to hear their views. This was particularly a problem in those states that did not commit up-front to funding communities that submitted plans. In these states, community members' reluctance to invest in the process was exacerbated by the federal-level debate over funding for social service programs, and the threat that funding for the FPSSP would be funneled through block grants. While the program could be continued under block grants, most community planners feared that with increasingly restricted funding, states would be pushed farther in the direction of crisis-driven services.

The other difficulty in involving parents and participants results from the focus of the legislation. The child welfare system, by its very nature, is not one that touches the lives of most community residents, and is not particularly welcome in the lives of those it does touch. This made it difficult to engage community residents in planning to reform the child welfare system. In most communities that undertook community assessments as part of the FPSSP planning, residents expressed more interest in services designed to get at issues such as lack of recreational activities, job skills training, and social supports than they did in child welfare services. This created a disparity between communities' priorities as they were identified in the planning process and the type of service and system changes that the states' child welfare departments were prepared to enact.

In many states and communities, residents needed to be convinced of the specific impact they could have on the system and of the ongoing commitment to hear their views.

Take Changes Beyond Child Welfare

Faced with significant challenges, a number of states and communities partnered to create plans that will have significant impact on the shape of services for children and families.

In the end, the biggest challenges to communities was the breadth of the proposed planning process. The child welfare system on its own is a complex system. Analyzing how this system interacts and coordinates with other state agencies and community-based programs is an extremely difficult task. Many of the changes that communities would like to see—changes that would create more integrated, more flexible, and more responsive services—can be facilitated only by significant changes in the forms, procedures, protocols, and structures not only of the state child welfare agency, but of the entire state human service system. These are changes that states have found difficult to make in general, and which are too costly for the Family Preservation and Support Services Program to support.

Future efforts to restructure services for children, youth, and families can benefit from the lessons we draw from local-level involvement in planning the FPSSP.

- Communities that were given money for planning tended to do better than communities that were simply asked to plan.
- Having at least one full-time staff person or consultant in charge of coordinating planning was important.
- Planning groups that built upon existing planning bodies or integrated existing planning efforts were more effective than those that were built from the ground or acted in isolation.
- Change was most likely to happen when community-level planning was accompanied by state-level systems change.

Local involvement in FPSSP planning needs to be an ongoing process, in order to achieve commitment and buy-in, and—most importantly—in order to forge the large-scale systems change that we set out to achieve.

Nilofer Ahsan is State Policy Analyst for the Family Resource Coalition.

Families in the Waiting Room:
Madeira Family Center Partners with the City of Philadelphia

by Shamara Riley

In the waiting room of Philadelphia's Health Center Number 5, tensions ran high. The room was noisy and traumatic for children, parents, and staff. Unable to afford childcare, most of the families who received medical attention at the Center had to bring all the children, even when only one family member had an appointment. Staff observed parents reacting to the tension by physically or verbally abusing children in an attempt to control them.

Enter the Family Health and Parenting Partnership, a collaboration between the Madeira Family Center and city's Health Center Number 5. The Family Health and Parenting Partnership offers a variety of family support services, all to fulfill its mission of:

1. effectively using the time that families have between medical appointments and

2. providing the Madeira Family Center's social services to health center users, to prevent subsequent health problems and situations that put children at risk of abuse and neglect.

While parents go to their appointments or take advantage of other support services, children can drop in to play with age-appropriate toys in the renovated playroom, which is supervised by a childcare aide who provides respite supervision. Parents are welcome in the playroom. For Annette Seawright, the Partnership's childcare aide, having been a former participant in the Madeira Family Center's programs helps her do her job. "It's helped me to expect the unexpected from children, and to be patient with the parents." The supervised playroom means "the waiting time for patients is not as much of a problem, because the children get their energy out in constructive ways under adult supervision," says Health Center Director John Magill.

Services and programs for parents include monthly brown-bag lunches, where family life issues are discussed. Phyllis Hall, the Partnership's family life educator, facilitates educational forums on health and child development, makes home visits (especially to families who have a child with special health needs), and advocates for parents to help address their health concerns. Hall has two major roles in the Partnership: advocate and educator. "Advocacy is vital," she says. "As a liaison between the family center and the health center, I advocate for parents in different areas. For instance, the health center had a long waiting period. I was able to intercede so that families can leave earlier than usual, to cut that waiting period." Individual counseling is also provided for families who use the health center; Hall often talks privately with parents about their questions and concerns while Seawright cares for their children. "I discuss subjects that parents decide that they need more information on—budgeting, disciplining, parenting skills, shopping, health issues concerning their body, as well as child development," says Hall. Health Center staff also conduct workshops and provide parents literature on issues such as juvenile diabetes, sexually transmitted diseases, children with seizures, and asthma.

In addition to these services, weekly parent support groups provide opportunities for parents to share concerns and learn from each other's experiences.

The program is voluntary, and staff encourage community participation by posting flyers about the Partnership's services in the Health Center. Hall recruits parents, and referrals to the Partnership are also made by Health Center staff and the WIC program on site. If families need additional support, they are referred to the Madeira Family Center, which is three blocks away.

All but one percent of participants are African American, so Afrocentric concepts are an important family support tool for staff. Children are taught about African American culture. "It is so important for African American children to know their culture so that they are proud of who they are," says Hall.

In many areas, Afrocentric concepts overlap with general family support ones. Staff build upon family strengths rather than looking for deficits when assessing families' needs. "We operate from the premise that parents can best provide support for their children if they get support," says Madeira Family Center Director Maisha Sullivan. Thus, Partnership staff impress upon parents that they are their children's most important resource in leading productive lives. The Partnership strives for unity (another Afrocentric ideal) between staff and families. Sullivan says, "We feel that it is important to bond with parents, so we work hard to build relationships and make parents feel part of an extended family. As a result, when issues do come up, we can help and not be viewed as an outsider intruding in their lives." Current and past participants make up a parent advisory committee that shapes the Partnership's services and programs and assesses the community's needs. Partnership staff and an advisory committee of representatives from the Family Center's three sponsoring organizations (the Episcopal Church of the Advocate, the Children's Aid Society of Philadelphia, and Episcopal Community Services) help parents acquire resources to act on their ideas.

Although in only its first operational year, the Partnership shows signs of success. Sullivan says, "The waiting room isn't stressful any more, parents aren't yelling anymore, and the children often don't want to leave!"

Seawright says, "The Center helped me be a better parent, and better manage my limited income. I learned how to cook healthy and inexpensive foods, and to speak up for myself and my family. I wanted to be a better person and they had faith in me." She adds, "I always talk about the program with my family, friends, or with people who I feel can benefit like I do from the support." And the staffs of both collaborative partners are pleased with the results. "The people [at the Madeira Family Center] who we work with are pleasant, professional, and have been a great asset to the Health Center," says Magill.

The Partnership is funded by the Children's Trust Fund of Pennsylvania.

Shamara Riley is Communications Assistant for the Family Resource Coalition.

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Center for Family Resources Helps Others Link Programs, Policies, and Practices

by Sheila Sussman

March 1, 1995. At the Center for Family Resources' (CFR) training facility in Mineola, New York, 24 early childhood and adult educators are in the final session of a 20-hour training to bring job preparedness and enhanced parent-child interaction into their family literacy work.

Three elementary school guidance counselors from a neighboring school district are working with CFR's resource specialist to select videos and print materials for their local parent involvement initiative.

CFR's receptionist is fielding dozens of inquiries about an upcoming conference on family support and human services delivery.

And CFR's training specialists and executive director are meeting with Head Start and other early childhood professionals to plan a new initiative for bringing family support activities into early childhood service settings.

This is a typical day at the Center for Family Resources. CFR promotes quality family programming throughout the New York region by providing information and consultation to policymakers, technical assistance and resources to professionals, and training to practitioners who work with children and families.

Created in 1981, CFR is one of the longest-running and most diversified of the intermediaries that have begun in recent years. CFR's founders were prompted by the dramatic societal and economic changes that were placing greater pressure on and adding more complexity and stress to most families' lives. The organizations that served families were under serious pressure in a time of diminishing resources.

CFR's development in the 1980s paralleled the significant shift away from crisis-driven, inflexible, and problem-oriented services and toward preventive, community-based, and strengths-oriented, family-centered programs with comprehensive systems of service. As schools, communities, and work places have increasingly adopted family support programs and practices, demand for training, technical assistance, informational resources, and affiliative activities has increased. Intermediaries, such as CFR, have become essential not only to enhance programs and practices, but also to make policy and education and human service systems more comprehensive, family-centered, and supportive.

CFR's staff of 20 and its volunteers carry out the center's work as a catalyst, information transmitter, strategist, "tool maker," disseminator, and capacity builder.

CFR in Action

In 1989, CFR researched a family literacy program model that was being developed and field tested in Kentucky. After creating an association with the National Center for Family Literacy and developing CFR's capacity to train staff, CFR became an intermediary for promoting family literacy in New York state. CFR built state and local alliances in adult education and early childhood, created and facilitated the development of family literacy pilot sites, conceived strategies to promote awareness and disseminate information to key stakeholders, and obtained current family literacy print and audiovisual resources.

CFR played many important roles in the New York Parents initiative, which began in 1992 at five sites across the state. The purpose of this initiative was *not* to adapt a single model to many sites, but to enable local programs to infuse their adult education and family literacy efforts with a variety of non-deficit approaches to parenting education, parent support, and parent involvement activities in response to their communities' needs. CFR assessed staff sensitivities, knowledge, and competencies; surveyed residents to match outreach and activities to the population being served; planned jointly with parents so that parents would shape each program; trained staff in family support principles and practices; and provided technical assistance to build capacities at each site. The New York Parents initiative is one example of how CFR is infusing the New York region's programs and practices with family support.

Most recently, CFR has put together a public-private partnership to bring the highly successful and favorably evaluated Parent Services Project (PSP) model program from California to New York state. This partnership includes a funding consortium of five foundations and the Agency for Child Development in New York City. Two beginning sites will be a step toward the goal of expansion throughout the state. In affiliation with PSP, CFR will provide coordination, training, and ongoing technical assistance as it facilitates the statewide development of the initiative.

Success and Challenges

For the past dozen years, CFR has served thousands of professionals and community leaders. It showcases successful family support programs and practices from across the country in its conferences for human service and education professionals and policymakers in New York, and holds follow-up training to encourage participants to replicate and adapt these models to build on the assets and capacities of families and communities in the state. CFR's resource library assists community-based organizations, schools, parents, students, early childhood programs, corporations, and others by providing books, curricula, video and audio tapes, and educational games. The library houses information about successful policies, programs, and practices, and provides the training and technical assistance needed to implement them.

The quality of CFR's work is widely recognized. Participation in CFR programs continues to increase. In 1994, 17 New York state agencies co-sponsored and supported CFR's "In Support of Families" conference. CFR has been awarded competitive grants from sources such as the Barbara Bush Foundation for Family Literacy, and in 1993, the National Association of County Organizations (NACO) conferred its annual award to a CFR program, SPARR (Single Parents Accessing Resources and Referrals). CFR's wide exposure to family support—from programs to

policy—makes it a valuable resource to national, state, and local policy and program advisory boards—such as the National Steering Committee of the FRC Best Practices Project, both the state's Advisory Committee for Title IVB Family Preservation and Support and its Select Committee for Family Development Associate Training and Credentialing, and the board of the Family Resource Coalition of New York.

The challenges CFR faces in meeting its identified goals and objectives are similar to those facing all family support intermediaries: creating and keeping a clear, positive role and relationship to others in the family support field, adhering to the careful integration of a family support philosophy, and committing to the implementation of both generic and specific practices. CFR knows that it and all intermediaries must address these challenges if the potential of family support approaches and programs is to be realized on a large scale, and has developed a strategy to do so:

1. Creating Greater Understanding of the Importance of the Intermediary's role

It is essential to educate policymakers, administrators, and direct service providers about the importance of the intermediary role. While interest in quality, comprehensive family-focused services is growing, funding is limited, so intermediaries are becoming even more necessary as they research new ways of working with children and families and other developments in the field and pass that information on to programs. One way CFR plans to demonstrate how its work and accomplishments enrich the field is by encouraging programs to acknowledge the need for training, technical assistance, and other services an intermediary provides when designing new initiatives. Creating, enhancing, and financing intermediaries needs to be a part of statewide welfare reform and early childhood and community development initiatives, because intermediaries are a cost-effective way to improve the quality of services.

2. Reaching and Serving Varied Audiences

Intermediaries must identify and meet the needs of a wider range of professionals than ever before: early childhood educators, teachers, guidance counselors, family literacy specialists, social workers, employment counselors, welfare workers, and human resource specialists in corporations are only some of the audiences who benefit from what an intermediary has to offer. But services must be tailored to each sector, perspective, and schedule. CFR is building its capacity to provide training, technical assistance, and information to new audiences even as its continues to strengthen relationships with those it currently serves, including state and local policymakers and the leadership of Head Start, Even Start, school reform, and welfare reform initiatives.

3. Understanding and Working Toward Truly Collaborative Services and Systems

Family support principles and practices are becoming part of almost all human service and education systems. This requires that all these systems share a common agenda and commitment to a family support approach, and establish new partnerships with the families with whom they work. CFR staff is increasing its capacity to enhance this collaboration of services and professionals through family support training across disciplines. At the same time, CFR is working to assure that the family support approach is integrated well with the specific skills required by each discipline or system.

4. Recognizing the Need for Assistance in Both Program and Process

Service providers, administrators, and policymakers typically approach CFR's staff with specific needs for family support program components. In many cases they have a specific model in mind, but do not know about other approaches that may be more appropriate for their setting, service population, and current philosophies of operation. And they may not yet recognize the skills needed to provide the programs or services they know their communities need. CFR staff can help identify the appropriate program components or services, and also offers both generic training in family support and specific training and technical assistance in proven program models. In addition, CFR is broadening the scope of its core resource services, including its library and publications, and may institute a toll-free phone line.

5. Moving Forward

CFR is demonstrating and expanding the role of an intermediary in education and human service delivery in the New York area. However, state and local program administrators, policymakers, and funders need to understand the essential functions of such intermediaries, as well as their staffing, financing, and management requirements. CFR is fulfilling its goals and objectives by building relationships with policymakers and program providers. It is expanding its capacity to respond effectively to new challenges for strengthening families. Locally, state-wide, and nationally, there is a need to forge new professional-parent partnerships, enhance collaborative initiatives, and pass on proven successful practices and the lessons of nationally evaluated program models. These needs make the role of an intermediary crucial to the future of the family support field.

Sheila Sussman is a founder and Executive Director of the Center for Family Resources and a member of the Family Resource Coalition's Best Practices Project Steering Committee.

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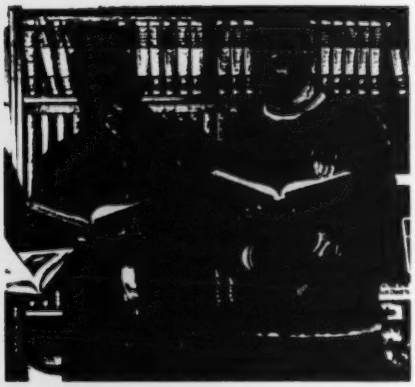
Tennessee's State Plans:
On the Ground in Chattanooga

by Stephanie Lubin



"We are truly a community center, trying to respond to every need identified by whomever walks through our door," said Chattanooga's Eastside Family Resource Center Director Anne McGintis. Mere minutes with McGintis showed her comments to be true.

I had come to Chattanooga to learn the secret to the success of the 11-month-old Center, one of 61 in a state initiative. On a day when area schools—and the Center—were closed due to snow, all McGintis had to do was pick up the phone and community leaders streamed in to let me in on that secret.

They were among 40 who comprise the Center's advisory board. McGintis called together 20 parents, along with 20 other community members representing businesses, government, universities, social service agencies, foundations, and artists in January 1994.

With neighbors such as Eastside Elementary School, a branch of the Health Department, the Special Olympics Office, and the Public Assistance office, the Eastside Family Resource Center is a hub of activity, programs, and services for families of East Chattanooga—especially those with children attending four nearby elementary schools.

The Center is part of Tennessee's 21st Century Schools Plan and the Tennessee Children's Plan, which pool the state's resources to meet the needs of children. Eastside was one of 30 school districts to receive $50,000 in start-up grants to last three years, starting in 1993, to implement school-linked Family Resource Centers. Thirty-one new centers were added this school year. McGintis was recently chosen to be the first president of the Tennessee Family Resource Centers' Coalition.

While the state provided her with some guidelines for running the Eastside Family Resource Center, McGintis knew what she needed to do to get started.

Going Door to Door

"I was hired in January 1994, and before the Center even opened in March I did a door-to-door campaign, a cafeteria campaign, and a street campaign—all to find out from my people on the streets and my families what they wanted and what they needed," said McGintis.

She introduced herself to parents while they had breakfast with their kids in the school cafeteria. She went to all the PTA meetings—just listening at first. She waited outside after school and talked with parents as they picked up their children. One day she even sat in the waiting room of the health center next door, "just to get the feel of who was coming in." All the while she told parents about the Center and asked about their wants and needs. Finally, McGintis sent surveys to all 8,000 parents, offering them a list of 300 different services and programs to check off. Their responses resulted in the Five Point Plan that guides the Center's offerings:

1. **Adult Literacy:** Not just reading and writing, these classes enhance educational growth and developmental skills of many types. Pioneer Bank provided 25 adult participants with scholarships to take "Real Life" courses in marriage and family counseling, personal money management, stress control, life after divorce, and physical education at nearby Chattanooga State Technical College. The College also provides teachers for the hundreds of students enrolled in GED, Adult Basic Education, ESL, and job skills classes.

   When the funding for her GED teacher was cut, McGintis went to a College administrator who was on her advisory council. "She gave me two teachers," said McGintis. "When people know what you need and have been involved at the front end, that's the key. Don't pull them in only when you need them. Have them there when you're doing well also." Free childcare is always offered to parents attending sessions at the Center.

2. **Parenting Education:** The cornerstone of this program is Parents Are First Teachers, Chattanooga's version of the national Parents as Teachers program. Activities at the center help parents and children find time to be together and help adults develop better parenting skills. Home visits are also a part of this Department of Social Services program. Parenting classes and workshops cover child development, discipline, family dynamics, academic awareness, communication skills, self-esteem, and health and nutrition. Even Start and gifted education classes are also offered. School Wise is a weekly class in which parents learn what's going on in the schools, when and how to prepare students for the PSAT and SAT, how to use the "lesson line" (a telephone message that gives information on homework assignments), and when parent teacher conferences are and how to prepare for them.

3. **Cultural Awareness:** Giving parents and families opportunities to enjoy the arts is a goal that community members identified early on. The Arts and Education Council provides free tickets to Saturday matinees at the local drama center for children and their families. Parents go to the ballet and take classes in art and creative movement. "Some of our parents had never been to the theater," said McGintis, who provides families with transportation. "We need to give them the opportunity to see things and experience the culture that abounds in our city." Families can even take etiquette classes.

4. **Community Involvement:** The Family Resource Center promotes and arranges projects that encourage active

participation in the community among families, such as classes in survival skills for women, Senior Citizens Day, "make-over" and "bad-hair" days, and male support groups. A local bank has made it possible for families to become home owners by offering affordable mortgages and a class for first-time home buyers. Seventeen families have bought homes as a result, and another 140 have signed up for the class (see sidebar).

5. **Information and Referral:** Eastside Family Resource Center has strong relationships with local service providers, enabling staff to help families use services for children and families, the Chattanooga Public Schools guidance counselors, social workers, a drug abatement program, mental health services, and the local food stamp office right down the hall.

McGintis wants families to know the Center is there for them, and spares no method to pull them in. "I do publicity on radio and TV talk shows ... and the Center's classes and events are posted on [local] Channel 3 every week. ... We get lots of new people this way."

Legislative Advocacy

When the state proposed to cut the Centers' $50,000-a-year funding by one-third after the first year, and two-thirds after the second, McGintis went to the capitol to testify in her capacity as president of the statewide coalition of Family Resource Centers. She argued from her own experience for the need to allocate $50,000 to each Center each year, and to maintain the Resource Centers as long as there are families and children in need. Her testimony convinced the Select Committee on Children and Youth to send the bill, calling for full funding, to the Senate and then the House, where, they assured her, it had a good chance of passing. The Committee also presented her with an award, acknowledging that through her energy and enthusiastic approach to helping families, she has become an excellent advocate and voice for all children and families in Tennessee.

Beyond the $50,000, McGintis has put together a budget for her Center of $300,000 through grants and contributions from such sources as Chattanooga Public Schools, federal Title I monies, the local Community Foundation, two local banks, the Junior League, and local fraternities and sororities.

Parents: The Core of the Center

As a former guidance counselor, McGintis knows how essential parent involvement is to children's success. The Center's "college prep" program gives parents of very young students a chance to have a "college experience." "I want these parents to realize that their kids *can* go to college, but that they'll have to help their children early on," said McGintis. With funding from the Danforth Foundation, this spring, McGintis will take 156 parents on a tour of colleges and universities in the region. Before the tour, which includes sleeping over in dorms, a series of workshops teaches parents how to write resumés, apply for financial aid, and prepare now to make college possible for their kids.

One of the Center's greatest successes has been to bring formerly isolated families together to learn from and empower each other. "There's a pregnant woman at our center now who's really having a hard time," said McGintis. "I think she's disappointed with her life. I overheard [her saying] something like, 'I'm just through with it. I'm fed up.' Listening to the other women talk, she felt a little better. Her friend said, 'Well, girl, don't give up!' I just sat back with such pride and watched the other women help her."

Samson Awotula, a Nigerian doctoral candidate in Chattanooga, has children at local Orchard Knob elementary school. His wife heard about the Eastside Family Resource Center through one of the teachers, and enrolled in GED and ESL classes. "This center has really been a great help to me and my family and I wish everybody could be involved and see what's happening inside here. My wife is in Nigeria for four weeks, and I thought I didn't have to bring the children in since she was away," Awotula laughed. "But I talked to [McGintis] and she said I should bring them in still. It's been a great help to us."

Anne McGintis thanks Chattanooga Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Harry Reynolds for his crucial role in the Center's success, and the Community Foundation of Chattanooga.

Stephanie Lubin is former School-Linked Program Specialist for the Family Resource Coalition.

For more information, contact the Eastside Family Resource Center, Chattanooga Public Schools, 2210 E. Main Street, Chattanooga, TN 37404, 615/493-9794.

Helping Families Own Homes

Linda Todd, Community/Public Relations Officer for American National Bank, saw a newspaper article on the opening of the Eastside Family Resource Center and had a revelation.

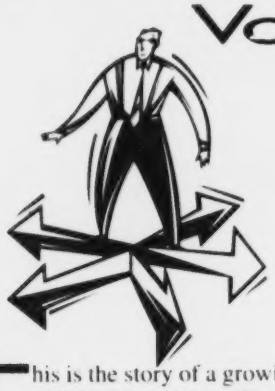
"I thought: family! The Center jumped out as an opportunity to really work together to develop skills for families for the end result of buying a home. So I got in touch with Anne McGintis and of course she jumped at it. And it has evolved."

In June 1994, American National Bank announced it would allocate $5 million for mortgages for low-income housing. The bank set up two programs: the Personal Economic Program, offering classes on basic money management such as checking and savings accounts; and the Home Buyers Program, workshops that take parents from, "Do I really want to own a home?" to helping them to establish or clear up credit records, save for a down payment, and buy a home.

The bank made the mortgages affordable with down payments of as low as $800. Approximately 17 families have bought new homes, and 140 have signed up for the classes. "The momentum is just now beginning," explains Todd. "New families are coming in every day to start the process."

After only one session of the Home Buyers Program, parent Clara Woods was excited about the possibility of owning a home. "I just can't explain the feeling I had when I left. I am determined to do this ... They have programs to help you qualify ... and they can even help you deal with a realtor," said Woods. "I'm just so excited about becoming a home buyer!"

Voices from the Field



by Ethel Seiderman and Lisa Lee

This is the story of a growing collaboration, born of concern. What role do grassroots practitioner agencies have in continuing to move the family support initiative forward? How do these programs sustain relationships among themselves and with other agencies involved in the broader issues of networking, policy development, and systems change? How do neighborhood and community programs continue to inform the field of what works on the ground and what doesn't? If too wide a gap exists between policy and programs, how will we test the viability and authenticity of policy? Are the programs the best vehicle for illustrating practices, for sharpening evaluation tools and assessments, and for providing the real life stories that give validity to theory? How can there be a reciprocal relationship?

A group of practitioners representing pioneer family support programs began to meet in September 1992 to address these and many other questions. The group named itself Friends in the Field. We are a consortium of practitioners representing organizations that developed, tested, implemented, and replicated programs that support parents and families—these organizations are MELD, Parents as Teachers (PAT), the Home Instruction Program for Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY), Birth-to-Three, Avance, Healthy Families America, Family Focus, the National Association of Mothers' Centers, and the Parent Services Project. While they differ in structure, funding, auspices, and clientele served, all these organizations share a common philosophy of parent empowerment and a belief that building on a family's strengths promotes positive outcomes for children, families, and society. Each organization has established methods for replicating its programs to reach more parents in communities across the country.

We wanted to look at ourselves, and to ask each other if there was a need for us to continue working together, and if so, how we might include others. Though we respected each other as participants in the same field who shared common principles, each of the programs had a different conceptual framework and we worked from different sets of assumptions. We each had pride in and a sense of ownership of our own program. Discussion was reserved at first, but eventually a consensus was reached to continue the dialogue and to continue to try to understand each others' work, to see where and if there were opportunities for linkages. Through our discussions we came to see that we could become an example of how separate agendas could be maintained while a collective agenda was framed on behalf of parents.

At a second gathering in New York City, seven months later, a growing sense of trust led to more candid exchanges. The group had come to a better understanding of how our areas of work complemented each other, what the differences were, and who wished to develop closer ties to other programs. Some programs had already made connections through joint programming and activities. Collaborative projects have been undertaken by several of the members. Training exchanges, joint replication efforts, and resource sharing needed further discussion. We did not want to force a premature decision on this emerging group, but needed more time with each other before creating yet another system ... or deciding not to.

Over the next few years, directors of the Friends in the Field programs made joint presentations in various arenas, including at the Family Resource Coalition conference. We discovered that we were a valuable resource to each other. With time, a spirit of cooperation has emerged and colleagues have called upon each other for support. Along with deciding whether we had viability came the issue of inclusivity. Who should be in this group and how should others be included?

Pioneers' work can be isolating. While most of us have a general knowledge about other approaches, by and large, we rarely have opportunities to gain insight about other programs. To avoid the creation of an exclusive or elite group, we grappled with the challenge of how to reach for inclusivity. We asked: What makes any of us more or less deserving to be at the table than other colleagues from across the nation? What size group is optimal for the kind of work we want to do? How do we structure such an entity so that it can have interest for a very large number of participants? How do we gather the participants so that we have regular contact and a set of purposes that bind us?

Peer support is important, yet if we agree to go forward, how do we decide what our goals and structure should be? What do we need from each other? What can we give each other? How can we increase our influence in the family support field? Is collaboration worth the effort? And for what purpose? Collaboration is harder than it looks and takes a lot more time and tenacity to work through the challenges and barriers that inevitably exist.

We all agreed that we could work side by side and that different models could and should flourish. We are still considering how to work with one another, how to include others, and how to collaborate with the Family Resource Coalition and other systems in "academia," research, and policy-making programs.

Grassroots Programs Have a Place in the Shaping of Policy and Practice

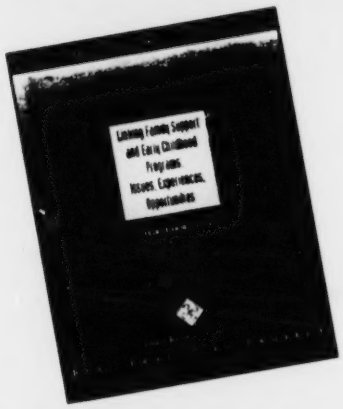
Many questions remain unanswered. Is an organization like Friends in the Field a viable way to connect the grassroots agencies to agencies involved in research, policy, or networking? How do the two groups interact? Would the grassroots group be a branch of the larger group; would it simply be a part of a membership; how would the larger group feed the grassroots group?

We continue the discussion among ourselves, are still interested in a format for dialogue with a broader group and are engaging in further considerations with FRC and with other appropriate organizations.

Ethel Seiderman is the Executive Director of the Parent Services Project (PSP), Inc. Lisa Lee is the Assistant Director of PSP.

For more information about Friends in the Field, contact PSP, 199 Porteous Ave., Fairfax, CA 94930, 415/454-1870 (phone), 415/454-1752 (fax).

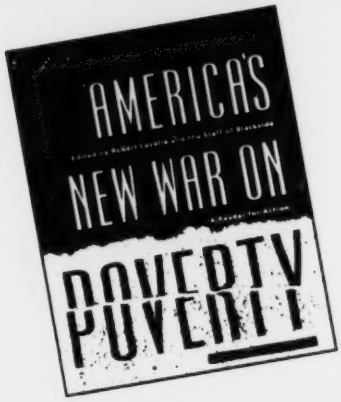
Have You Heard About ...



Linking Family Support and Early Childhood Programs: Issues, Experiences, Opportunities

by Mary Larner
ISBN 1-885429-09-6
(Family Resource Coalition, 1995, 40 pp., paperback)
Available from FRC, Item No. C026
FRC Members: $5/Non-members: $7, plus $1 shipping

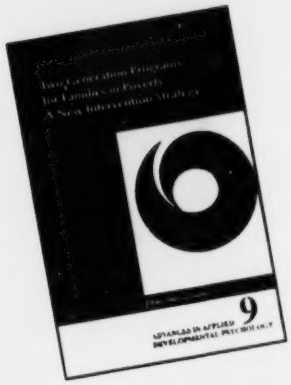
Close collaboration between parents and childcare staff, a range of parent activities, and an organized network of referrals to community resources—can a childcare program turn these ideals into reality? Mary Larner describes the need for the family support and early childhood fields to come together to heal America's way of caring for children, and shows how some programs are beginning to do that. The first in the Family Resource Coalition's series of monographs commissioned by the Best Practices Project, this paper describes the fit between family support and early childhood programs and chronicles various programs' experiences linking family support and childcare—including programs that provide family- and child-focused services, two-generation programs, Head Start, and programs seeking to make childcare family-friendly. A final chapter encapsulates Larner's vision of what it takes to bring the values of family support—including seeing all family members as vital resources in raising healthy children—to public and private childcare. (This issue of the FRC *Report* includes an excerpt of this exciting new publication.)



America's New War on Poverty: A Reader for Action

Robert LaValle and Blackside staff, eds.
ISBN 0-912333-37-5
(KQED Books, 1995, 250 pp., paperback)
Available from FRC, Item No. X032
$13.00 plus $2.50 shipping

From the producers of the PBS five-part documentary "America's War on Poverty" comes this practical and inspiring companion guidebook. Senator Barbara Boxer says these short stories, feature articles, and essays "put a human face on the staggering problem of poverty in America today." Passionate fiction by writers such as Dorothy Allison, Alice Walker, and Toni Cade Bambara, and compelling reports from journalists and social visionaries including Jonathan Kozol, Lester Thurow, and Marian Wright Edelman vividly demonstrate what it means to be poor in America today. And profiles of successful anti-poverty programs show how real people are building living communities to change the future and give genuine reasons for hope.



Two Generation Programs for Families in Poverty: A New Intervention Strategy

Sheila Smith, editor
ISBN 1-567501-01-X
(Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1995, 288 pages, paperback)
Available from Ablex Publishing Corporation, 201/767-8455
$24.50, call for shipping charge

A fundamental principle of family support is that children's well-being is tied to their parents'—and vice versa. The programs described in this book integrate services to help parents improve their education and employment status with other services to promote children's healthy development. The four models are examined close-up to show how they assist families in finding a pathway out of poverty while also providing immediate support for children's development. In addition, the authors assess the potential value of the models and how replicable they are; current knowledge about the effectiveness of welfare-to-work interventions; and trends in child, family, and welfare policy. The book's renowned contributors base their analysis on early program evaluation data, and describe ongoing evaluations that will further assess the impact of two-generational programs.

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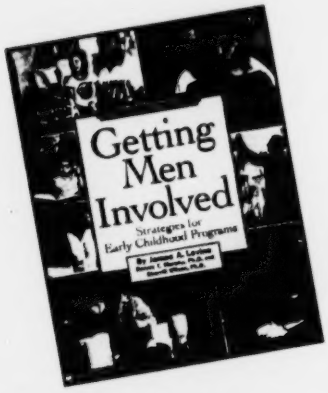


Getting Men Involved: Strategies for Early Childhood Programs

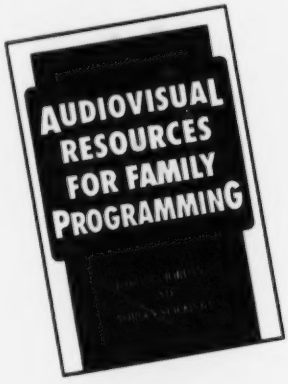
by James A. Levine, Dennis T. Murphy, and Sherrill Wilson
ISBN 0-590496-05-0
(Scholastic Inc., 1993, 96 pp., paperback)
Available from Families and Work Institute, 212/465-2044
$13.00 plus $3.50 shipping

This nuts-and-bolts workbook shows early childhood programs how they can encourage and support men in becoming active fathers and care-givers. Its four-part format begins with a convincing argument for why male involvement is important, then dives into specific strategies for programs to use—both immediately, and sequentially, following the book's four-stage plan for program enhancement ("Creating a Father-Friendly Environment," "Recruiting Men to Your Program," "Operating a Fathers' Program," and "Sustaining Male Involvement"). A third section brings the strategies to life with portraits of 14 successful programs in various racial, ethnic, and geographic settings. And nine final pages describe valuable resources—from books for children to articles, volumes, and curricula for parents and practitioners. Co-author James Levine is Director of the Fatherhood Project at the Families and Work Institute, and is a former teacher and long-time champion of men's involvement in raising children.

Parenting: An Annotated Bibliography, 1965–1987

by Sandra Feinberg, Barbara Jordan, and Michele Lauer-Bader
ISBN 0-810826-64-X
(Scarecrow Press, 1995, 814 pp., paperback)
Available from Scarecrow Press, 800/537-7107
$97.50 plus $3.50 shipping

How do you find tools for working with families? This comprehensive bibliography is your key to a vast variety of texts on parenting, both in and out of print, from more than two decades. The diversity of texts included reflects the complexity of issues facing parents and the professionals who work with them: prenatal care, child development, recreation, health and safety, education, childrearing and parenting techniques, mental and physical disabilities, and activities for adults and children to do together are just a few of the topics covered in the resources described. From pregnancy on up to the parenting of adult children, you'll find resources on every stage of development. Special chapters cover resources about and for single parents, teen parents, and working parents. Each annotation includes a description of the resource, unusual features, and intended audience. The authors list only those titles that they were able to examine.



Audiovisual Resources for Family Programming

by Barbara Jordan and Noreen Stackpole
ISBN 1-555701-91-4
(Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 1995, 437 pp., paperback)
Available from Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 800/584-2414
$29.95 plus $4.75 shipping

Indexed by subject, this annotated bibliography describes more than 1,700 non-print resources for anyone who works with families—including family support staff, other social service providers, and educators—as well as parents, children, youth, school and community groups, and librarians. These videotapes, games, kits, audio cassettes, and curricula cover the entire range of parenting, child development, and child-rearing topics, from pregnancy and childbirth through adolescence, including family challenges such as death and divorce, blended family living, substance abuse, adoption, foster care, and the struggle to balance work and family life. Videos aimed at youth cover school issues, decision making, self-esteem, anger and conflict management, sexuality education, substance abuse prevention, and life skills development. Also included are hundreds of titles for parents of children with disabilities and chronic health problems. Resources listed are held by the Suffolk Family Education Clearinghouse at the Middle Country Public Library in Centereach, New York.

What Works in Preventing Rural Violence: Strategies, Risk Factors, and Assessment Tools

Wilder Research Center
ISBN 0-940069-04-0
(Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 1995, 94 pp., paperback)
Available from Wilder Publishing Center, 800/274-6024
$17.00 plus $2.00 shipping

From 1965 to 1992, rates of rape, assault, and robbery tripled in rural communities, leading community residents and leaders to seek solutions. This book documents their efforts, detailing the unique characteristics of rural violence and outlining 88 violence reduction strategies developed and field tested in the past decade, and is intended for rural community leaders, service groups, extension agencies, local governments, and any rural resident wishing to improve community safety. Some of the strategies target behavior that is linked to violence, such as alcohol and drug use, in order to lower rates of rape, domestic assault, and other violence. Other strategies are designed to reduce bullying, theft, vandalism, and other specific violent behaviors. In addition to compiling strategies, *What Works* includes the "Community Report Card," a set of worksheets that can help users monitor violence and its prevention in their communities. The Report Card can help assess the level of services available for dealing with violence. Literature review and bibliography included.

FAMILY RESOURCE COALITION

CAN WE TALK?

Talking face-to-face, sharing experiences, asking questions, getting useful information. That's the Family Resource Coalition's favorite way to give and get family support information. At the next FRC national conference (April 30–May 4, 1996), we'll have literally hundreds of opportunities to talk and listen to each other.

In between conferences, we "talk" to you, our constituents, by publishing *Policy Beat*, the Connection, the *FRC Report* and the Caucus Voices, along with books on current topics in family support. And our telephones, fax machine, and computers are in constant use as we provide technical assistance and resource and referral services to you and others who share your concerns.

But listening comes before talking. Every survey and questionnaire you return, every article and interview you contribute to our publications, and every letter and call you send our way gives us an opportunity to "listen" and learn—so that we can respond to your needs.

Without your input, we'd have little to report. You work directly with families, plan family support initiatives, conduct research that will improve families' chances for success, and carry out so many other activities that make you the experts we turn to as we gather information—and then pass it on to others like you!

A journalist calls, and wants to connect with programs working with teen parents for an article he's writing. A legislator calls to find out about model statewide family support initiatives that her state could learn from. A researcher contacts us for help in surveying programs for parents of early adolescents. We turn to the information you have contributed to answer these requests. Your work may be part of our program database, which we constantly tap into as we seek programs to profile or mentors to connect with fledgling efforts.

And how do we decide what to write about in the *FRC Report*, or in the fact sheets and special newsletters we produce? Your questions and requests tell us what issues are of greatest concern to family support programmers—whether it's tapping into federal funding streams or developing culturally appropriate training curricula, you're the ones telling us what you need.

So until we can talk face-to-face—at the 1996 FRC national conference or sooner—keep those letters, phone calls, and surveys coming. Your ideas, suggestions and, yes, even criticisms will keep us well-informed, relevant, and worth listening to!

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